This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

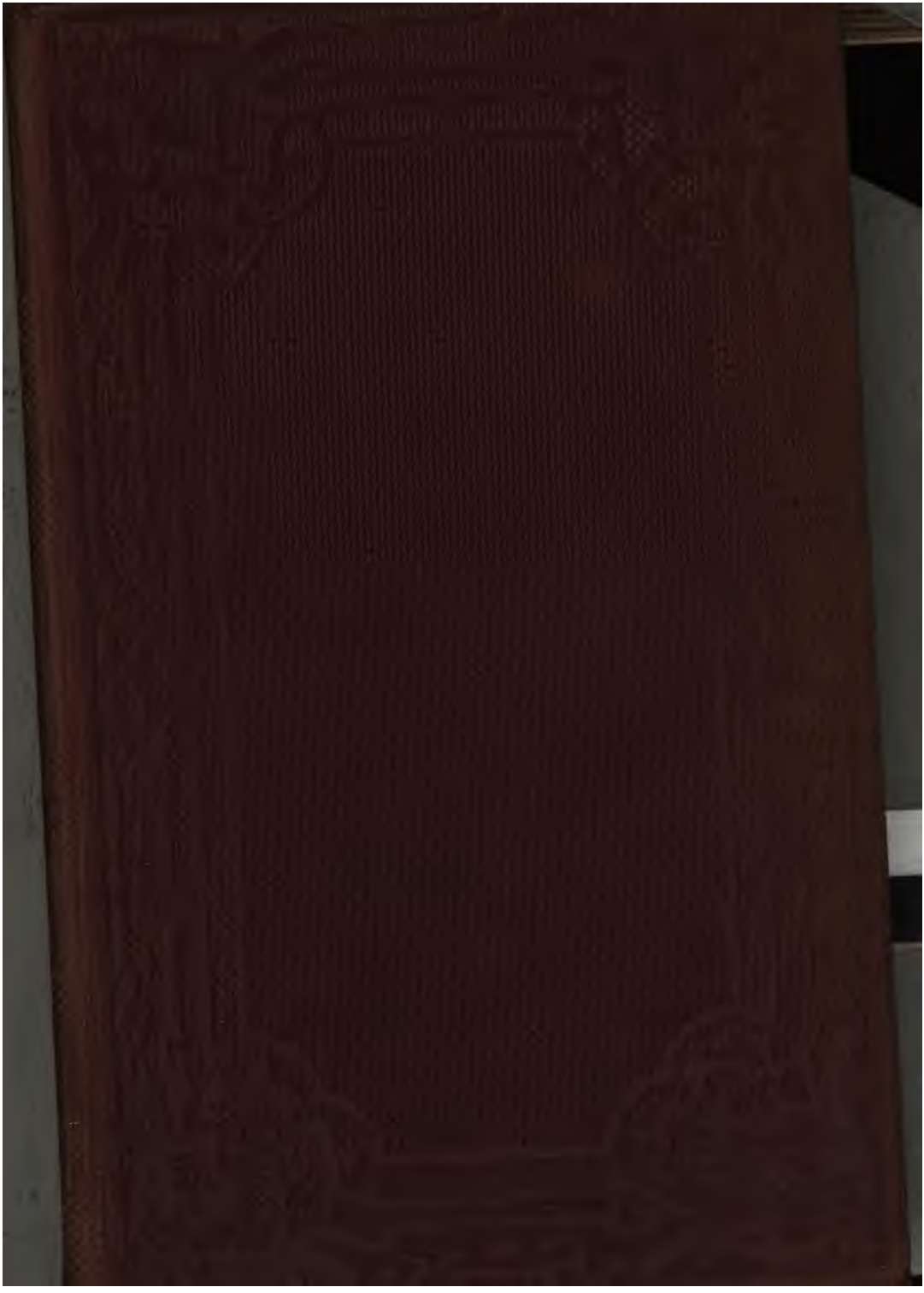
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



600069433V

MARGARET HAMILTON.

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. C. J. NEWBY,

AUTHOR OF "MABEL," "SUNSHINE AND SHADOW."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1858.

249. w. 335.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

IN REMEMBRANCE

OF MY HAPPY CHILDHOOD,

I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES TO

MY DEAR MOTHER.

LONDON, 1858.

MARGARET HAMILTON.

CHAPTER I.

It is June.

The unkind east wind, which has been blowing all the spring, has worn itself out at last, and summer has taken possession triumphantly. The blushing May blossom is seen everywhere now, looking none the less charming because it is a month too late. The woods are fresh with young foliage, and the fields are laughing with moon daisies, and sparkling with buttercups.

It is fine—not cold, changeable and rainy—but such as we remember it long ago, when we closed our books after a whole half year's study, flung learning and improvement to the winds, and prepared to stand still awhile and enjoy ourselves, and be idle and happy, while progress marched on without us. And though we knew we could not do this always, and we would not if we could, yet the pleasure of those long holidays have left a freshness behind them, and given a buoyancy to the feeling of all our after lives.

The midsummer holidays have begun again, now, and hundreds of happy children, after having counted off every day for the last five months, have gone away to taste the exquisite pleasure of being at home. The watering places are full, not with fashionable loungers, as they will be a month or two hence, but with merry young faces—children busy upon the sea sand, with their tiny wooden spades erecting fantastic buildings,

or digging trenches, or making miniature rivers, wholly regardless of those moralists who may be watching them.

Summer is everywhere, merry, rejoicing hay-making, cricket-loving summer. London feels it through all its many suburbs, and hastens to welcome it with fresh white window curtains, through which peep brightly tinted geraniums. Summer has driven away smoke and fog—the public buildings stand out in bold relief, and there are gay carriages rolling through the streets, and elegant loungers in the shady gardens of Kensington. The vast city, the heart of a mighty empire, has on its holiday appearance, and looks well, great and noble as it is, let who will gainsay it.

Yes, summer is everywhere. It even makes its presence known amongst the dark buildings in Chancery Lane, bursting through the dusty windows, and making the yellow blinds still more yellow, as seen through the glaring sunlight—staring broadly

in upon the third floors, with their barely furnished rooms, always so oppressively light and noisy, and yet so solitary; buzzing with flies, and yet so free from the expected voices of clients.

Thus, at least, it seemed with Mark Hamilton as he sat at his table reading, or rather trying to read, for his head ached, and he could not keep out the sun which shone down through the three long windows so unsympathizingly upon his desk, where briefs were not.

"If I had been sensible," soliloquized he, "I should have taken a back room lower down, where I might, at least, have enjoyed the shade. Who will ever come up so many stairs to find me out. I never was in a more wretched room in my life, and yet for this, yes, and the back room for my clerk, ha, ha!—as if I should ever want one—I pay thirty pounds a-year. Well, I have saved something by turning that into my bed-room, and so

contrive to exist. Exist: it is that and nothing more. How little did I think it possible that such a life could be in store for me when I first hired these rooms and furnished them six, nay nine long weary months ago. How superbly I did it too. My carpet nearly covers the whole length of the boards, and, where it does not quite do, I must needs have it pieced out with oil cloth. My table, let me see, that second-hand, cost just three pounds, and my desk fifteen shillings; that book-case, too, reaching nearly to the ceiling, I call a magnificent affair, and a bargain at two pounds ten shillings. Well, it holds my books, and without them I do not know what I should do. I might have put them into the cupboard, and spent the money upon coals; but there, except in very bad weather, a great coat does almost as well. Pride goeth before destruction Mark Hamilton. How proud I was of that book-case, and for nearly nine months not a creature has

been here, but my sapient and money-making cousin, Richard Daventry, who looks in about once in three months to see if I am doing anything, as he would be so pleased to hear that I was going into court. I wish he were sincere, only I happen to know he cannot be, or that last business would have been sent to me. I hate to be suspicious, and will starve before my poverty turns me against my fellow man; but poverty is poverty after all. Old clothes, soiled shirts, and rumpled collars, razors that won't cut, soiled neck ties, and one pocket-handkerchief a week: that is poverty. Bah! as if I cared whether I eat cold bacon or roast beef for dinner, or whether I drink claret or water. My soul is above these things, but it is not above rumpled collars. Nevertheless, I do pretty well, even against those troubles, and the wheel of fortune must turn soon, or if not, when I see, as I do, the sufferings of the poor creatures, many of them far superior, morally speaking,

to myself, within a stone's throw of my own windows, I bow my head in gratitude to that Providence which has so gently measured my load of trial."

Well done, Mark Hamilton! There is scarcely a blessing this earth can give which equals a contented mind and a thankful heart—thankful because it knows how little it deserves, and how great are the simplest and most common of human blessings. Food, though that food be scanty, raiment, though that raiment be poor and old, freedom from pain, which many prize so lightly, these are still undeserved blessings for which it becomes us well to be thankful. And Mark was thankful—firm in an untiring reliance upon that mercy, which the darkest shadows of human trial, but seldom shut out from his trusting soul.

What a noble creature he was too—even as he sat there in his desolate chambers, where, except by the variety of his own thoughts, or

the books he read, to-day was like yesterday and the day before, and many many days before that. Where the to-morrow, which was to bring a client, never came; but was put off still to another and another ever trusted and never coming to-morrow. Still what a noble creature he was, as he sat there in the sunlight which streamed in through the yellow blinds. His broad expansive forehead, his well shaped but massive head, his large full eye, keen as an eagle's glance, that tall and well made form so erect and manly, so easy in every movement, so strong in every muscle. And over everything, that joyous sense of life, that keen appreciation of what is witty, or merry, or clever, which would make itself felt even here. In addition to this—nay his speech, his bearing, his footfall asserted it—he looked with respect upon himself as a man, he possessed a strong reliance upon his own intellect, and a knowledge of his talents and latent energies, even in the very teeth of failure

and discouragement; and more than all this, he entertained that fear which alone makes a man courageous before all mankind.

And yet his present life was a strong temptation to him, for few men can bear enforced idleness, waiting for employment; but he knew this, he looked upon it as his present temptation, and he set himself resolutely to bear it. He was an odd fellow, too, in his way, and he kept up his spirits in a manner which, upon first sight, may not seem calculated to have that effect. He spent the greater part of his leisure time, that is when the appearance of business did not confine him to his chambers, in visiting those streets and houses which are inhabited by the very poor, bringing their sufferings before the eyes of his richer friends; and thus, often by dint of labour alone, sometimes carrying them efficient aid. Advice and sympathy he, at least, could always give, and many a man who had laid down determined to try no more, had, at the

sound of his cheerful voice, tried again, and been successful. Amongst those who deem that they have no friends, and none to sympathize with them, he was gradually acquiring an influence slowly but steadily. Vicious men, who turned from religion and called it cant, watched this earnest man in the fresh vigour of youth giving up his energies for something which could not be unreal, and were astonished. They saw one who was ready to extend his sympathy in right good fellowship, and allow, with touching humility, that he differed from them only in the gradations of guilt, and they could not always resist that hand whose strong grasp urged them to turn to virtue and right, and that winning tongue which could use such merciful and yet such forcible language.

In this employment he had gradually learnt to feel himself at home, and when a discontented mood assailed him, he would think of the poverty and wretchedness, and the strong

and resolute endurance with which it was met, often unseen and unnoticed in mighty London, and school himself and be content. It was something, too, for such an intellect which might in idleness have burnt itself with its own fire to very ashes, to compose some thrilling tale, or to tell in such language as might reach the elegant and refined through some paper or periodical, the story of any visit amongst his poor friends of more than usual interest, and thus earn perhaps a little in aid of his schemes for the alleviation of the mass of human misery, he had been so earnest in studying. In the activity of thought thus inspired, lay, perhaps, the secret of that joyousness of tone and manner, which he preserved in spite of his present professional discouragements. Mark had entered the law, because he liked it, and he felt that he was fitted for the profession; because the study pleased him, and because he knew that he was eloquent. He had, however, forgotten

that he had little legal interest. And so, in short, though professionally well fitted for what he had undertaken, he still wanted the opportunity to show himself; and, in spite of all his good resolutions, a despairing mood would sometimes come, though often, as to-day, met rather with ridicule than sympathy. But now, how his head ached! Temptation suggested that it was of little use to pursue the study of the law when he had no means of practising it, and might have as little a year hence as now. The unwearying sun left not a shady corner in the whole room; the buzz of the innumerable flies tired him beyond expression; and he rested his arm upon his desk, and his chin upon his hand, while the expression of his face became gloomy. At length there was a step upon the stair-case; it passed the door below him; it still ascended those broad, lead-covered steps; it must be coming to him. The long-expected client was come at last, how his heart bounded, how

unconscious he tried to look. No; it was the postman—how his heart sank as the echoes of receding steps died upon his ear!

But there was a letter at least, which, passed through the slit in the door, had fallen upon the ground unheeded in the first moment of disappointment. After a pause, he walked across the room and took it up. The direction was in his sister's handwriting, the characters of which were peculiarly open and straightforward. He broke the seal hastily, and read:—

"Starborne Street, Islington.

"My dear Mark,

"Will you come and drink tea with me to-night, for I shall be alone, as papa is going to take mamma, Alice, Olivia, and Fred to Sadler's Wells this evening, with tickets sent by Aunt Anne. I have declined going, because I much want to talk with you; so, pray come, if you possibly can.

"Your attached sister,

"MARGARET HAMILTON."

Was there anything good to be told? he thought, as he scanned the letter again and again—any change for the better in the family fortunes, which had done nothing but go down hill for so long a time past? or was there another trouble come to shadow the life of that sister, who seemed doomed, like himself, to struggle with trial and adversity?

Certainly, whatever it was, he would go and hear.

CHAPTER II.

PERHAPS there are few walks in London more depressing than that which leads from Chancery Lane to the Angel Inn, at Islington. There are some minds so full of the promise of opening life, so untinged by disappointment, that scarcely anything in the outward life around them has the power to cloud the sunshine of the spirit; there are others to whom shabbiness and untidiness, and poverty and suffering, form but a seeming echo to their own sad thoughts. How many men, who, on their first entrance into London, have chosen a cheap locality for lodgings, full of

steady reliance upon themselves and upon the world, have trodden this route uninfluenced by anything here! how many more still have found it but a poor restorative for their wearied nerves and failing hearts!

It was in this direction that Mark took his way, when the evening hours told surely enough that the hope of a client was over, for that day, at least. Having reached the Angel, that bustling resort of omnibuses and business, he took his way over Islington Green. This prospect was not altogether unpleasing; so that he stopped awhile to watch the children at play, and felt grateful that some space for air and exercise had been left for them here amongst the crowded streets and choking alleys.

Of the two roads which run on either side of the Green, the upper of which leads through Islington to Holloway, and so on to Highgate, and the open country beyond it, Mark chose the lower, and walked on for some way. Pre-

sently he came upon a small church, which served him as a land-mark. The Lower Road does not form a cheering promenade at any time, and in the glare of an early summer evening it was suggestive of nothing but a headache; but the small church, sober and quiet as was its architecture, standing in its little open space alone, formed an agreeable break in the road: something which the eye could fall upon with a feeling of rest amidst the wide, straight, dusty, and monotonous streets. Mark turned down from the road when he reached this church, and, taking his way through several streets, he crossed the Downham Road, and entered one street containing, perhaps, forty houses, closely set together, but not by any means ugly in their appearance, if one could only forget a nameless something about them, which seemed to cast a damp upon the spirits from their very walls. Starborne Street opened at the end into a little bit of untidy waste land, yet re-

maining "to let" as a site for new houses, and here rested the remains of a gravel heap and some mounds of earth, which were worth more than gold to the small school-boys, who found amongst them some most dirty, but inexhaustible, amusement, wholly inexplicable to the older inhabitants of the neighbourhood. But the crowning glory of the place was an immense circular building, which reared its head far above everything else about and around it, where the most wonderful feats in horsemanship were nightly displayed, and from the gardens of which "splendid displays" of fireworks were wont to issue upon dark nights; not only fireworks and horses, indeed, were there, but in pleasing variety to these, every now and then, a monster balloon, after vast preparations, was suffered to escape from its "moorings" and ascend into the air, amidst the shouts of spectators, and followed for some distance upon its route by a motley crowd of populace.

Mark stopped before one of the small gates (for there were gates here, in affectation of the country, perhaps) and entered a garden of a few square feet, which, with its row of young evergreens, looked as if it would be cheerful if it could; and, mounting a few steps, knocked at the door.

It was opened by a young woman, in whose countenance the principal expression was fatigue; but she returned a smile, as she almost always did, to his cheerful greeting of "Good evening, Mary," and opened the door in the passage for him to enter the sitting-room.

There was a character about this room which told its own tale. It was so small, that to swing in it that cat which is always brought into juxta-position with small rooms, would really have been an impossibility. Yet it was not one room, but two joined rather than divided by folding doors. There were two windows, one in each room

and the cross light gave a cheerful appearance to the whole. The furniture was seemingly quite unfitted for the rooms, and had evidently been purchased for a much larger house. The handsome inlaid rosewood table, and the elegant lounge filled almost entirely the front room, whilst the piano and another table equally filled the back one, leaving the chairs to quarrel for places. The hearth-rug made probably to match some other carpet, now extended over half the room, while the blue satin curtains fell thick and heavy round the small windows, and indeed wholly covered the two ends of the room. Yet inappropriate as the furniture might be considered by a skilful upholsterer, it formed the one redeeming feature in the comfort of the place.

The solid and handsome articles, crowded as they certainly were, suggested an appearance of size and comfort which no arrangement of tiny chiffonniers and miniature book-shelves

could possibly have done; and the large arm-chair near the fire-place could not have been re-placed by anything more really suitable, though it did occupy one-sixth part of the room.

As it now appeared, it was a lady's sitting-room,wholly separated from any vulgar feeling or accompaniment. And here, as Mark entered, sat a young lady on a low confessional chair near the table. Her work-box was before her, but she was not working, and writing materials were near at hand, yet she neither read nor wrote—perhaps she was thinking, perhaps only waiting for him in that pleasing idleness which is sometimes welcome after a day of healthy occupation. Yet her cheeks were very pale, and the heavy folds of her rich black hair fell carelessly over them, while the dark eyes, which were wont to give such tone and brilliancy to her intelligent features, were still and heavy.

Margaret rose, however, immediately, when

Mark came in, and said eagerly and rather rapidly,

"Oh, I am so glad you are come. You can bring up the tea now, Mary." And then she began to question him. "Had he seen any one? Was he very tired after his walk? Had he had any pleasant letters? or was there any news in the paper?" evidently determined that whatever she had to say should not be said until Mary had brought the tea, and left them quite undisturbed, and this was a matter which it took longer to accomplish than might seem necessary to the uninitiated, but Mary had a way of her own in doing things, and they were wise who did not attempt to ruffle, or as she termed it to flurry her. Mary was one of the best servants living, but she had a temper of her own, and those who enjoyed her services had to pay the tax of submitting to it.

Tea was however arranged at last, and Mark had reviewed a book he had just read

amusingly enough, and was beginning to think that Margaret only wanted to have a quiet chat with him, when she suffered the conversation to drop of itself, and there fell an ominous silence. Then Mark noticed how pale she looked, and how heavy her eyes were, so he said kindly:

"You are not very well to-night, are you?"

"I am very well," said Margaret gently, "but to tell the truth, I am sadly out of spirits; and it pains me so much to have to vex you too."

"What is the matter?" said Mark hastily, "tell me at once."

"These dreadful money matters again," said Margaret, looking down, "do not be angry, Mark, I cannot help it indeed; would that I could."

"Angry, I am not angry; but what is the matter?"

"I know it is bad to keep you in suspense, and I would not if it were my own confession

I have to make; but poor papa is in such dreadful trouble; he has lost a hundred pounds, and he has told me; and—" said Margaret, her voice now husky and broken.

"How do you mean, lost?" cried Mark. Margaret turned away her head as if it were her own sin she confessed, as she murmured faintly,

"In play."

The fine blood mounted to Mark's face, and then left it, ashy pale.

Margaret continued. "You know how he has looked, and how anxious I have been; and how angrily he has come home at night, making poor mamma so unhappy. Last night after dinner he was more than usually desponding, and spoke desperate words which frightened me very much, abused what he called our poverty stricken dinner, and refused to eat any, which made mamma cry; and then he seized his hat and rushed out of

the house. I could not bear this any longer I ran up-stairs, put on my bonnet and shawl as I came down, and followed him. Papa had reached the end of the street, and yet I kept him in view, had he seen me he would hardly have recognized me, that I knew very well. I followed him to the Angel, and on half-way into town, when he suddenly stopped, and hurried in at a door: I looked at the door, and saw "Billiards" written up in large shining letters. I waited for him to come out, and no one seemed to see me, for with my old garden bonnet on, any one might have taken me for a servant; but he did not come out, and at last I got frightened, and then feeling sure that I could do no good, I went home; it was a long way, but I was too frightened about him to think of myself. I came home, and no one saw me but Mary; I said something about papa to her, and mamma did not know I had been out. I made her go to bed early, and sat up that

night alone. I very often do so now," she said sadly, and then hurried on, for Mark was listening eagerly, his head upon his hand, his eyes fixed upon her face.

"Papa did not come in until one o'clock, and then his face was pale, and instead of being angry as he sometimes is, he sank down on his chair and said nothing. I gave him some tea, which he drank eagerly; I then knelt down by him, and begged him to forgive me, telling him, that I had followed him that night, and had seen where he went.

"He was not angry, but looked hard at me, saying quietly, that he did not know that any one loved him so well. Of course, I told him how much he was mistaken, how we all loved him, and how miserably anxious he was making us. Then I begged him to let me know if anything were the matter, I entreated him 'till he actually wept, and said he would tell me everything. Oh Mark! think of poor papa's having to confess to me; and now

I scarcely dare to tell you, but ever since the failure, all the time he has been here, he has been in the habit of going to these places to drown care, and partly with an insane hope of getting money enough to do something; and now he is one hundred pounds deficient in his accounts. They may not have to be shewn for months, they may be looked at to-morrow, and if the deficiency is not made up at once, he will be disgraced, and, poor as this situation is, he must lose it. Oh, how I wish this were but a fearful dream, and we could wake and shake it off."

Mark buried his face in his hands. He had met sorrow and poverty with a brave heart; but dishonour! he had never thought of *that* before.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Hamilton had early in life, through the influence of his father, entered as junior partner in a large banking house in the city. He possessed average, though not first rate abilities, and had been for many years a useful and respected member of the firm of Barnes, Jones and Co. He, Mr. Hamilton, stood expressed by Co., and he had well sustained his part by an assiduous attention to the minutiæ of bank business. But a leading member of the firm he certainly was not, nor

did his brothers in business do more than consult him nominally, when any bolder measure for their aggrandisement required his signature. He, however, was well contented to follow where Barnes and Jones were still more contented to lead; and if it sometimes glanced across his mind that any proposed scheme was more rash than he would have attempted, he was satisfied with saying that it was not of his doing, and that Barnes and Jones must answer for it. Messrs. Barnes and Jones seemed, indeed, quite capable of answering for themselves, and had every appearance of knowing what they were about. There was no one in the world for whom Mr. Hamilton had a greater respect than he had for these partners, and no one of whom he stood mored ecidedly in awe. He spoke of them confidently enough, quoted their opinions, and relied upon their authority, but to go to their private rooms at the bank, or receive either for a *tête-à-tête* in his own, was rather more than

his nerves stood well. And yet Mr. Hamilton had no cause to fear any one; though a junior, he was yet an independent member of the firm, and there was no real reason why he should stand so much in awe of Mr. Barnes's strictures or Mr. Jones's biting remarks. He might, in case of quarrel, have given them as good as they brought, without fear of ulterior consequences; but then he did not and never could. Yet he was a man of acknowledged probity, liberal in his expenditure it might be, but true to his payments; and though sometimes a little irregular in his private accounts, no tradesman need ask him twice for his money. He was universally respected for his probity, his word was depended upon, and his credit formed in reality no mean part of the stock in trade of Messrs. Barnes, Jones and Co. But there came a day when all that seemed so firm and secure gave way around him, and left him standing alone amidst the wreck of honour, credit, wealth and comfort.

One Monday morning he left home rather later than usual, for he had been nursing himself all Sunday with a bad cold, and reached the bank only in time to find himself amongst a crowd of other applicants for admittance, for the shutters were still firmly closed, and there was no sign of life or business there.

From the terrified and mutinous crowd, he learned that the news had already spread that his partners were missing; but no one cursed him, or, in the midst of their own misfortunes, failed to pity him, as he stood pale and troubled amongst them.

Perhaps Messrs. Barnes and Jones, when they fled, knew him too well to think that he would make himself a partner in their dishonour, or fail to shew, with honest indignation, that he had no part in their proceedings. Or, perhaps, they were so eager to secure themselves, that they did not remember him at all. Even at that moment as he stood there before the shutters of his closed

Bank, he felt grateful that they had given him no warning; that by his very position of horror and surprise he might prove that he had no knowledge of their proceedings. No one cursed him, and when he let himself in at his private door, no one attempted to follow. He hurried to his room; a short note was lying upon his desk, in Mr. Barnes's well-known writing. In the ordinary course of things, he would have received this before the usual banking hours as he was always early. The note contained but a few words, it stated simply that the Bank could not open that day, as rumours were already abroad which would cause a pressure before night, and, therefore, that it was better to close at once. They had absented themselves, and trusted that he would effect an arrangement honourable as could be made under the circumstances. They left their honour in his hands. They knew he would not have fled had they given him warning. He thought

they might at least have tried him; his remaining would have been more honourable if optional; but his partners probably knew that he would have spoiled all before the time, or they were as fearful of meeting him as the public.

At all events, they were gone. There had come a crash wholly unexpected, and he was alone. Was he sitting with folded arms, with pale face and head bowed down. Was there terror upon his spirits as of coming death, or, worse than death, of shame?

No, strange as it might seem, he had not for years felt so much at his ease. Barnes and Jones were gone, there was no fear of meeting them anywhere about the bank to-day. They had been the greatest men in all the world to him. To-day he was infinitely their superior; where they had fled, he could stand boldly. He was alone and master there, though only for a few hours, and master only of a wreck. And yet the chain was off his

intellect, no one would thwart his will now, not one of the clerks in their confusion would quote the name of either partner against him. He was a ruined man, and yet for a few hours he was his own master, and the intellectual fetters from which he had suffered so long, were altogether broken.

The prospect before him, was, however, no cheering one. Mr. Barnes would have shrunk from it, and Jones would have given it up in despair, but Mr. Hamilton was cool and collected. Never had he even had a doubt of their integrity until then, and now came the conviction that his partners must have taken with them heavy sums of money. They had probably provided well for their own safety, and had foreseen their failure long before. One thing distressed him in the midst of all, not so much how the news would eventually be borne, for that he had not time to realize, but how he should tell it at home, how the blow would fall first, how they would bear it, what words he should use.

Should he write or wait until his usual time of going home, would his wife shriek as she had done, when a long time ago he had to tell her that her father had died suddenly.

It was, therefore, greatly to his relief that presently the door opened softly, and his eldest daughter entered the room, pale but composed, and with no sign of tears, thinking evidently only of him; some officious friend had already carried the news, and Margaret thought, she said, it might be a relief to him to know that mamma knew it, and she had come to tell him so, and to help him if she could. He did not ask her how she came, for her fashionable habit, and her very becoming hat with its sweeping feather told that she had brought out her horse that day, probably, it might be for the last time.

Margaret remained with him all day. She asked no intrusive questions, but she was ready to do any thing he might wish; to write family letters for him; to keep up his spirits,

and to arm his resolution. His behaviour that day so enkindled her enthusiastic love for him, that no after weakness ever damped it. With warm feelings, and an earnest love of what is noble and honest and right, she listened proudly to his disclosure of his intentions, and saw him act nobly in the midst of the most painful difficulties. He had that day a meeting with the principal creditors, and enraged as they were with his partners, they could not but promise him patience, and confess that they trusted every thing to his honest candour.

It was a long task that of unravelling the intricacies in which Messrs. Barnes and Jones had involved their affairs. It took some time to bring their fancy-farms and country-houses to the hammer, but at length Mr. Hamilton succeeded by unwearying attention in passing their accounts through the Bankruptcy Court. He even shielded, as much as possible, the men who had ruined

him, though to do much for them was not in his power. He obtained his own certificate of honourable bankruptcy, though he received, at the same time, a reprimand which he knew he well merited, for not having seen more strictly to the state of the books at the Bank. He knew he deserved this, but it rankled bitterly in his mind; he thought much more of it than of the public praise he had received. He had acted well, he had reserved nothing from the wreck, no private jewels or family plate, and he had given up the interest of money secured under his marriage settlement, which would, for a ruined man, have been a handsome provision, he had deserved both praise and commiseration, and he found them. Then came the reaction, and the fatal thought presented itself, not what he had done to deserve such a lengthened term of prosperity, but what had he done to call for this withdrawal of it.

What indeed! Who can rightly read the

workings of an ever watchful Providence. Perhaps against him the searching accusation had been uttered—"Touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

Who can tell? Our part is to walk humbly and to trust always. Years to come, perhaps even in this life, we shall look back, and read these passages in our lives, as plainly as we now read of the wanderings of the Israelites, and find that in what seems so dark and difficult now, Providence was but waiting to bless if we had had but faith and patience.

Mr. Hamilton, when he had time to think of himself, was thankful to obtain a situation in another banking house, at a salary of a hundred a year, and carrying out instantly his plans of stringent economy, he resolved, against the advice of his friends, to retire to a cheap locality, and with an obduracy in self-infliction, which a hermit of the olden time might have shewn, he took a small

house in Starborne Street, Islington, and removed there a sufficient quantity of furniture to furnish it quietly—furniture from the old house in Westbourne Terrace, treasured because used for so many years. He would have been wise, had he remained in his own neighbourhood, and accepted frankly whatever attentions his old society would have given him, in pity or kindness, or better, perhaps, in real friendship.

Edgworth did not think that it disgraced him to set aside a considerable sum of money, more than he had any right to afford, and to spend it in extravagance, and even in play in France, for the actual purpose of introducing himself into the society of men of taste and letters, and when this money was spent, he retired from this reprehensible mode of life, bearing with him into retirement the friendship of those men, whose companionship he deemed really desirable.

Mr. Hamilton had now an opportunity of securing the same advantages without the

like sacrifice of principle, and, since good society is undoubtedly a bonâ fide blessing, he might still have enjoyed some fruits of his prosperous days.

But in his present humour, his ideas of retrenchment and economy were so rigid, that he seemed determined to make them as disagreeable and hard as possible. He therefore left the neighbourhood, where, some rays from his former wealth might yet have lightened his poverty, and banished himself to Islington, where the necessity of an eight shilling cab 'there and back,' effectually removed him, with his slender income, from the attentions which many of his friends were at first eager to press upon him.

Then, the season of excitement and self-sacrifice over, he realized his position. A clerk when he had been a principal, the chain of dependence pressed hard upon, and galled his spirit. Weary, weary was the walk night and morning to and from the city; every day his house looked smaller and the situation

more confined, his spirits chafed themselves and grew restless, his hopes of old friends opening before him some brilliant prospect of rising in the world, and redeeming the past died out at last, and gave place to sickening disappointments. He thought that in such a "poor place" as this which he had chosen, a hundred a year would go far, but he was soon obliged to accept his son Mark's offer, at first gratefully refused, to share his Fellowship with him. That galled and fretted him as all things galled and fretted him now; he lost patience, he lost temper, and self reliance. Then came for a temptation the mad hope of making a fortune by chance, as if that were possible. The fall was rapid, and yet it may be said that he took to sin unkindly, and repented at every step. He seemed to be losing everything, even his own self approval and his love of life, that healthy incentive to action.

He was morose, unkind, ill-humoured, mad

he thought himself at times, not well or happy, or at peace with his wife, all things against him.

Yet in all this, Margaret stood firmly by him, nothing could shake off her watchfulness, or abate her love. In the morning at his early breakfast, at night when having dined in town, he returned sullenly to his bed.

On Sundays with him to some distant church, or seeking air down those shadeless roads, untiring, cheerful, watchful, patient and unanswering, she became the link between him and life, the only hope which still amidst the darkness pointed ever heavenward.

CHAPTER IV.

MARGARET waited awhile in silence. She well knew what her brother felt, for she had tasted the same feelings all that weary day. She well knew that, whatever remedy might be suggested, (could it even be an instantaneous one), it would still be impossible to remove the heavy stain of sin which had fallen upon a life hitherto justly honoured.

Mark looked up, at length, however, and said wearedly, as if suffering from sudden fatigue.

"You know the state of my funds almost

as well as I do; I might borrow money upon my Fellowship, but that would be at exorbitant interest, I suppose, and perhaps involve the necessity of insuring my life, but then, the Fellowship mortgaged, I could not do anything for my father for a year or two, and now he could hardly get on without me, could he?"

"You are always ready, Mark," said Margaret, "always ready to sacrifice yourself, but you already do more than you should be suffered to do. No, I have another plan, and I only need your consent to execute it. We want the money to-morrow, to-night even if we could have it; and as I told you just now Aunt Ann is in town. With all her peculiarities, I do not think she would reject a petition of mine, I think she would let me have the money."

"She is incautious," said Mark, "and not to be trusted with such a secret, she would reproach him and drive him mad."

"Not upon any consideration would I tell

her all," said Margaret, "I shall simply borrow the money. I think I can persuade her, and my conscience will be at ease, for I know if there is one person in the world besides her son whom she loves, it is papa. Could I tell her the real facts, the money would be a gift I am certain, and not a loan."

"If you can manage it so," said Mark, "I see no reason why it should not be done. I must do my best to repay her for you, and if I could only get a few clients, I might do that easily enough. In the meantime, we can have no rest until the money is replaced. I shall not sleep in peace until then. But does that cure the evil, in a few more months we may have to do the same thing again. Who can guard against such a fatal passion."

"Papa has promised me," said Margaret, speaking with the earnest credulity of womanly feeling, "promised me that nothing, not even the fear of disgrace which presses

perpetually upon him, shall ever tempt him to play again. I think he has been the victim rather of a desponding mind, than of an actual passion. Oh, poor papa! if we can rescue him this time, I have little fear."

"And he is gone to Sadler's Wells to-night," said Mark, a little incredulously.

"That was by my persuasion. Aunt Ann sent the tickets, and mamma was very much inclined to go. You know we must not let her know anything of this; it would almost break her heart."

Margaret did not say that it would probably do worse, lead to an aggravation of the endless little disagreements which now formed the greater part of their trials, for it is the trial of the day more than that of the year which forms the sum total of human ill. Mark knew this almost, though not quite as well as she did, and he also joined with her in avoiding a topic painful indeed for children to comment upon, but he

raised his large expressive eyes, and contemplated her for a few moments with the feeling of affection almost amounting to enthusiasm which had ever existed between these two. United each to refine and ennoble the other, Margaret had greatly helped to make Mark what he was, and he had assisted her more than any other in becoming the being whom all trusted and relied on.

Oh! if one were to write a book and put nothing in it, from the beginning to the end, but that word "Love," what a deep moral might be read in it, a moral which would make many a wise heart good, many a good heart wise, and bring many an erring one home—home to rest and peace.

They sat late, Margaret impressing deeply upon Mark's mind, the sorrow and trouble their father was enduring, and the necessity of watching and giving up everything for him in future, as if she had not done so already for many a month past.

Mark took care to leave before the party returned from the theatre, and Margaret feeling also quite unable to meet their possibly lively remarks, went to bed, leaving to Mary the charge of waiting for their return.

The next morning she announced her intention of going to see Aunt Ann. Anything like caprice was so unlike her, that she had much difficulty in getting away alone. Her mamma would go if she would but wait until the afternoon, and Alice would go out with her at any time. Having excused herself to both, she set out resolutely alone, and having reached the Angel, she took an omnibus to the West End of the town. Little did Aunt Ann know that even the sixpence for the omnibus had now become an object to poor Margaret as she received her in her fashionable lodging, and made in her own mind a flattering comment upon the elegant simplicity of her attire.

"You are early, my dear," said Aunt Ann,

kissing her languidly, "perhaps, you are come to tell me how much you enjoyed yourselves last night. Was I not wise to fix on Sadler's Wells, which I thought being near you, would save a fly. Was it good? Shakspeare I was told: Macbeth was it?"

"I think it was Hamlet, but I am not certain. I did not go last night, but sat at home with Mark, who drank tea with me."

"Ah, how is Mark? he must come and dine here; tell him I have no engagement out for many days to come. Is he as charming as ever? Do you know I have been working so hard to get him a client?"

"It is very kind of you. Have you succeeded?"

"No, my dear, we must have patience; Richard will do all he can, be assured of that. But now you shall see my yesterday's purchases, I value your taste above all things, and I suppose you do not see many pretty things now."

"Very seldom indeed; but, dear aunt, I will not look at them now, you shall shew them another time. To-day I have pressing business—a most urgent favour to beg."

"Speak out, my love, I hate preambles."

"I want you to lend me some money, aunt," Margaret said, her voice now half choked by rising emotion.

Aunt Ann eyed her curiously.

"It is the first favour I have asked of this kind, and I know it will be the last, so do not refuse me."

"To what extent?" said Aunt Ann more coolly.

"One hundred pounds," said Margaret faintly.

"A hundred, my dear, you must be dreaming. Where am I to get a hundred pounds from? You think, perhaps, that I am made of money, because I dress well and travel; but this is why I am always poor."

"Aunt, you must let me have the money now, to-day," said Margaret resolutely, "and

I will, as certainly, repay you with interest, high interest if you require it. I do assure you, that I only ask because I wish to save trouble and sorrow at home, such sorrow as I trust you will never feel: and you will tell papa and mamma nothing of this, out of your great kindness and love for us all. I know you will do all I wish, dear aunt," she said, as the tears almost blinded her eyes, but then brushing them away, she added cheerfully, knowing this to be the only effectual manner of dealing with Aunt Ann, "I know you are poor, as rich people always are; but for all that, you will drive me to Coutts's, and let me have this hundred I ask for."

"You are a daring girl," said Aunt Ann, admiringly, "though you may have been a very foolish one. You will marry well, no doubt, with a little of my guidance. I never could keep within my allowance," with a half pleased sigh, "and see how well I married. It is something to know how to spend. You

shall have the money, my dear, and we will drive to Coutts's as you propose; but you must pay me, remember, and you must not borrow again, for I am really poor; believe me, there is a good girl, I am as poor as a church mouse. And you will marry well, will you not, Meg? I always thought, with your very strict notions, you might be a little obstinate upon the marriage question; but now that I see you are as imprudent as other people, I have my hopes of you."

"It is just possible that I may indulge you some day," said Margaret, smiling faintly, "but I hope to repay you long before that. Here, aunt, is an acknowledgment of the money in due form. You see, I was secure that you would do what I wanted; and you are very good, and I am so much obliged to you."

"You are a daring girl, I say again; but you know nothing else answers with me, so now," said she, ringing briskly, "James, you must get me a carriage immediately."

Hastening away to her room, she drew Margaret with her, and in the interludes between putting on her bonnet, settling her shawl, and changing her shoes, she insisted on exhibiting her late purchases made during her two or three days sojourn in town. Margaret's practised eye could well appraise the value of the laces, velvets, caps and bonnets, submitted for her approbation, and she felt more easy with respect to the loan, which had seemed so formidable to her. At the same time, she understood well, that her aunt might be speaking the truth when complaining of her poverty in ready money, if such purchases as these were matters of every day occurrence. She did not blame her, though she sighed to think of the unequalities of fortune; for she remembered that there had been a time when her own liberal pocket money had scarcely met the profusion of her expenditure. 'Hardship makes us wise,' she thought, 'and Aunt Ann has never known any, yet how kind and good she is.'

She had little time for reflection, however, before she found herself driving rapidly into the bustling regions of the town.

How eagerly and how thankfully then did she receive the notes which her aunt counted into her hand. They formed the ransom of more than life, of honour; and, as soon as they were in her possession, she felt inclined to rush away from her, regardless of all the little proprieties of the occasion.

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Daventry, "to what pretty shops shall I drive you? for these bills might as well be paid at once. Temptation and gold, I have always found run in couples."

Margaret's rich blood mounted to her very temples; but she knew that she could not enter upon explanations.

"One thing," she said quickly, "pray promise me, you will not say anything of this to mamma. I do not mind papa much. Yes! I would rather you did not speak to him; but not upon any account to mamma."

"I promise, my dear," said Aunt Ann, "confide freely in me, and you will find me a true friend always; but do not get into another scrape until you are married, my dear child. An indulgent husband thinks little of these escapades, but my prudent Margaret must not play the Camilla too fast."

"Oh, believe me, no, dear aunt, never shall I be forgetful of your kindness to-day."

"The Bank, my dear, did you say I was to set you down at the Bank, in all this crowd!"

"Yes, if you please, I can do my business better on foot. A hundred thanks, good bye."

She waited a moment, until the carriage had turned, and was rolling away, and then holding the notes tightly in her hand, she hurried on for a little way, until she reached a portentous looking building. Here she entered, and a few seconds of nervous enquiry, sufficed to bring her to her father. About half an hour afterwards,

she came out again, with her veil drawn closely over her face; and walking on more quietly, she came after some time to Chancery Lane. She was tired now, weary with the strained calm of two days of suppressed excitement, as she toiled up the heavy leaden steps, until she reached the door upon which the name of Mr. Mark Hamilton was painted in distinct letters.

Mark welcomed her eagerly.

"I have paid the money. He is safe," she said, sinking into a chair and bursting into tears.

"There's a brave girl," said Mark, at once proudly and compassionately.

CHAPTER V.

THERE was a small room in the house in Starborne Street, situated on the basement floor, and next door to the kitchen. Mary always stoutly contended, in her dialogues with the younger Hamiltons, that this was, in fact, the front kitchen itself, which they contradicted by alleging that the fire-place was not fitted for a kitchen at all. It continued a vexed question, however, for Mary never could reconcile herself to the "mean, shabby, poky little place," which she was compelled to sit in, and she and Master Fred Hamilton, would continue the argument sometimes for

an hour together, as she sat industriously working at her white deal table, which was ever so faultlessly clean, and he stood in all importance with his back to the fire, chopping logic with marvellous rapidity, but with no visible effect whatever; for she continually confounded all his rules of argument, either by wandering from the point altogether, or by sticking blindly to simple assertions.

It was a comfortable little room, however, whatever had been its previous destination; and here the family took their meals, and carried on their studies.

Alice and Olivia were yet too young to be considered educated, and had seen little of society, since, at the time of the bankruptcy, they were not of an age to visit, and were seldom allowed to see much company, even at home. Alice had now reached that doubtful age when, in some people's opinion, she ought not to leave the school-room, whilst others uncharitably surmised, that if her sister Margaret were

married she would not be kept back at all. Olivia was a year younger than Alice, but she possessed that style of face and figure, which makes many a girl of fifteen look twenty, and in appearance there was little difference in age between the two younger sisters.

Margaret thought that the loss of wealth might be permitted to bring an exemption from these cares of a young lady's life, and that their now rare and simple pleasures might be taken in common. She had entered society as early as her appearance in it could possibly be excused, and she had derived from this (which to some is a very dangerous experiment) an easy manner in company, alike removed from freedom or fear; and a quiet reliance upon herself, which is often of more real import than beauty or talent.

She had made her appearance in the world, in fact, when too young to be much noticed, and she had learned its freemasonry before being called upon to listen to much of its flattery. It was a privilege of which no after

retirement could rob her, and she was anxious that her sisters should now enjoy the opportunities of visiting which were sometimes offered by Aunt Ann. Mrs. Hamilton was, however, more than ever determined to push Margaret forward, when the opportunity occurred, and to keep back her younger daughters. Alice and Olivia, too, agreed, that the more retired they now lived, the greater sensation they would make when appearing suddenly in the world, and though they looked upon Margaret with considerable kindness, they could not help declaring, in the confidence of their daily walks, that she had lost the freshness and bloom of early youth; and that, however much her sterling qualities might be recognized, she would never now create anything like a sensation. That was past for poor Margaret, who had been so prematurely pushed into assemblies, and who had been seen everywhere, at an age when to think of marriage would have been an impropriety.

So reasoned the disciplined judgments of

sixteen and seventeen, as they resented, almost with indignation, any sisterly offer of exchanging places with her, when some unexpected treat was proposed by any old friend, too kind to forget her in her poverty.

Meanwhile, the two younger sisters worked at their studies, as if an examination upon all modern accomplishments and branches of learning awaited their entrance into society. Margaret encouraged, but tried to regulate this excessive zeal, and endeavoured steadily to lead them to consider rather the ultimate ends of education, than the steps which led to them.

Fatigued by her morning's visits, and the excitement which had attended each, she was now sitting in a low chair in the corner near the fire-place, removed a little from the sunlight which played through the muslin curtains of the window that opened upon the low brick wall which formed a protecting support against the earth of the little garden that appeared above it. This little opening, Mar-

garet had often wished to see filled with scarlet geraniums and heliotrope, but the few shillings which would have purchased this refreshing luxury, were now beyond her power. There was a look of weariness about her just now, and she felt indeed that it would have been an over trial of her brain to exercise it in any thing beyond the simple stitches of the piece of German wool work which she held in her hand.

Alice was seated at the table before an open Tasso, and a small dictionary, prepared, as Margaret knew, for their afternoon's reading, while Olivia sat in silence writing a French exercise with wrapt attention.

"May I bring Tasso now?" said Alice at length, after vainly waiting for any sign of Margaret's attention.

"I will read a double piece with you to-morrow," said Margaret, looking up faintly, "if you will prepare for me now instead. I am so very tired from being in London

to-day, that I scarcely feel equal to any study."

"You went in an omnibus, did you not?" said Alice, bluntly.

"Yes," said Margaret, "I suppose I ought not to be tired. Oh!" she thought, "could they know one half the agony I have been enduring!"

Alice pouted, and putting away Tasso with an audible sigh, took down a volume of Robertson and began to read sulkily.

Margaret's little rest was effectually destroyed, and she knew now that she might have been far less disturbed by Tasso than by Alice's distressed look. She said nothing, however, for since she had undertaken the necessary charge of superintending her sister's studies, she had quietly, but decidedly, set herself against this form of selfishness. She knew she should serve them little by indulging it, and her own character was too decided for ill-timed indulgence.

Now, however, she felt the little unkindness sensibly, and could not help the few tears which rushed to her eyes and blinded them for an instant. Then, hastily correcting herself, she remembered that Alice could not possibly know that she did feel so much weariness, for it was very true that an omnibus to Aunt Ann's, and a chat there, were insufficient to render her unfit for a little quiet study. The three girls continued in silence for nearly an hour, when, Mrs. Hamilton entered with her bonnet on, and her black mantilla, white with dust.

"How could you venture out upon such a day as this, mamma!" said Margaret, looking up affectionately, "I am afraid you are very tired."

"Tired!" said Mrs. Hamilton in a voice of despair, "when am I anything else now? I should not have gone out at all, only you forgot to order any potatoes, and Mary says she has no time to go running about, and

looks so cross if one does but hint at such a thing. Really that girl's temper is unbearable."

"Hush mamma!" said Margaret gently, "the kitchen is so close, she will be certain to hear you."

"Oh! nonsense, Margaret, she cannot hear. Still I do wish you had not forgotten to order the things necessary for dinner. I shall not recover myself all day."

"I am sorry, indeed, that I forced you to go out mamma; but let me take your bonnet upstairs, and bring down your cap; and then you can rest here, without moving, until dinner time."

Mrs. Hamilton lazily assented, soothed as she always was by her daughter's attentions, but turning to Olivia she said gently.

"My dear you go, Margaret is tired."

"Go where?" said Olivia abstractedly, not having heard a word of what had been said.

"Take up my things, and put them away, and bring down my evening cap."

Olivia left the room evidently thinking of the word she had last found in her French dictionary. Presently she returned.

"My dear, you have brought my morning cap. I wish you would look about you a little. You will be turned into a French verb one of these days. Here, Margaret, you must go, after all, I suppose."

Margaret went.

"You know," said Olivia seating herself at her table, "no one understands your drawer but Margaret."

"But why not?" said Mrs. Hamilton, "does nobody care for me but Margaret?"

Olivia went on writing; but a dark shadow rested upon her countenance.

At length Mary came to lay the cloth, and Alice and Olivia reluctantly put aside their books, and went up-stairs to dress for dinner. Margaret being ready for it, went up-stairs to the sitting-room, where she had taken tea with Mark, and sat down to play

a few airs upon the piano, listening all the time for her father's coming. 'In what mood would he return?' she thought sadly, and feeling dejected by fatigue and the oppressive heat of the day. 'Could Mark's fears be correct, that this was but the beginning of evil? Oh, no! no!' she exclaimed to herself, covering her face with her hands.

Her hands were gently removed, and looking up, she perceived her father standing by her side; he was very pale, but, there was an earnest affection in the expression of his eyes which gratified her deeply. He held one of her hands in both his, as he murmured passionately,

"What have I done to deserve such a child?"

"Who would not do anything for you, dear papa?" said Margaret gently.

"Many would not; not my wife, who should have borne with me at all times; she is parted from me, at least in

heart, and thinking myself forsaken and alone, I have given way to despair. I am awake now, however, and deeply grateful for the mercy which has been sent to me. Many times I have thought that I *deserved* mercy and good tidings, but they came not; now that I have deemed myself past hope and utterly unworthy, help has been unexpectedly given. I am not ungrateful, I will try, but oh, never never, Margaret, my child, can I meet the world with the consciousness of self-respect; never shall I feel worthy to call myself your father. You are my guide, my ministering angel. I a child to you."

Margaret laid her face upon his breast.

"Oh, dearest papa!" she said softly, "sometimes I think that we are often left to our own help, to shew us how weak we are; and that often those who sin and really repent, afterwards reach a higher standard, even through very humility. We learn so entirely then to hope nothing from our own merit. We feel

that no homage is too great to render to Him who has forgiven us, and so, gladly offer up our lives as a thank-offering in return for such boundless love and pity."

"Is it so my child? Yes, my heart was presumptuous; vain of a little public self-denial, and I fell; oh! how deeply, and oh, how bitterly I have suffered. Guilt bears its own punishment. But you have been to me a messenger of mercy. Heaven bless you, my child!"

The door opened hastily, and Mrs. Hamilton looking in, said with a tone of jealous coldness:

"I suppose, sir, you do not know that our 'poverty stricken' dinner is getting cold."

A look of intense pain passed over Mr. Hamilton's countenance, but without reply he followed Margaret, with such humility and dependence that a very child would have been touched.

CHAPTER VI.

If Margaret had in the days of girlish prosperity read, half in sympathy, half in wonder, those books which tell of women whose hearts yearn for some mission which may employ the energies of heart and mind, to which they may devote themselves, and in which duty is indelibly written, she felt that she had no cause to seek for it now. Her mission was easy to read in the daily duties which called for her attention, and more, in the tender and affectionate watch which her father needed.

It was perfectly true, as Alice and Olivia

argued, with that charity so peculiar to very young girls, that the first bloom of early youth was gone for Margaret; the freshness which bespeaks a country unexplored, the charm of novelty. Yes, those were past indeed; but with them had gone also, the crude opinions and uncertain principles of early youth, its blind prejudices, its changeable affections, and obstinate, but ever variable notions. And having past these, she had attained in their stead, the firm, but gentle, soft, yet self-reliant principles of a noble womanhood. Self-forgetful, priding herself no more upon those fleeting vanities, which a sensible mind needs but a few years' experience to rightly estimate, she was more worth loving now, than if that same bloom about which Alice prided herself so much were upon her still.

For her was passed the vanity so often caused by the novelty of a good deed done. It was not sufficient for her that her father, from that day when she had helped him in his

utmost need, relied upon her, watched her, and almost obeyed her. She had a nobler ambition, and she employed every faculty she possessed to restore him to himself, and to place him again above her. This she effected with infinite tact. She treated him with increased respect, and seemed to have become more dependent upon his opinion, and to find his advice more necessary. To please her, and there was nothing he refused her now, she made him read out of an evening, impressing him with the necessity of guiding the taste of Alice and Olivia in selecting portions of light literature, for which they said they had never yet found time. So hard had they studied of late, that they looked upon this listening time as rather a sacrifice, until Margaret pointed out, with great gravity and earnestness, the importance of this kind of study as an ornament to their heavier reading.

The autumn was now closing fast, and winter was steadily approaching, and the comfort of

these social evenings was more and more felt. Fred Hamilton would seat himself near the fire, and work away at a net which Margaret had encouraged him to undertake, which was intended as a cover to a projected hen-house to be erected in the spring; and while Mr. Hamilton read, Alice and Olivia worked away under their mother's superintendence, beginnning, true to the changeable feelings of youth, to attach a great importance to the necessity of making perfect button-holes, and stitching immaculate collars and wristbands.

Mrs. Hamilton was, but for the infirmity of her temper, and the strength of the temptations to despondency, caused by the loss of wealth and influence and social power, a well-meaning woman. She had been irritated, as she believed, past endurance, first, by her husband's thoughtless and selfish expenditure when every farthing had become of importance to them, and by his lingering fancies for turtle soup and burgundy, "when she was willing

for her part to put up with anything." Then his irritability had succeeded, and repeated coolnesses followed.

She believed herself injured, and without attempting to palliate or excuse his conduct, gave him word for word, and silence for silence, until something very like a continued estrangement seemed inevitable between them. And what estrangement can be worse than that which exists between the hearts of those who live in the same house, eat at the same table, and lie down at night upon the same bed?

Suddenly, she knew not how or wherefore, there came a change, she did not date it from any time, but it broke upon her by degrees. When she rebuked, her husband was silent. When she was sulky, he spoke cheerfully and kindly. He brought her home sometimes a pennyworth of sweet scented lavender, or a few roses purchased at a price equally costly, but they were given with a kind look, or a

cheering word. Sometimes, too, of a Sunday he asked her to walk with him, and so gradually they fell into the habit of being intimate again.

How welcome was all this to Margaret's heart. How humbly thankful, and yet how always watchful she was for him; and how, if mistakes arose, or her mother grew angry, was her voice always ready to fall like oil upon the troubled waters.

No one but Mark, who loved her with such a faithful affection, saw, that even before her efforts were so rewarded by success, her cheek grew paler, and her health seemed sinking under the perpetual mental watchfulness she had maintained.

There was, too, the burden upon her spirit of a debt she had no means of paying. It had been worth any pain, which it had cost her, she had long ago decided, had it been ten times as great. Still, reason as she would, the debt was there. Until it was

paid it would be fresh in her aunt's remembrance, of course, and the distressing secret always upon the eve of disclosure. She dreaded her letters, for sometimes they contained allusions which forced her to destroy them.

Guileless, open, and candid in her own dealings, she felt almost shocked at being forced into anything like *finesse*, or concealment; and often, with a weary heart, she wished the debt were paid.

She was sitting alone one afternoon when the others had gone out for a walk, leaving her at her own request, for she was now too often glad to be alone.

There were many books upon the table, but her eyes rested only on the supplement of the "Times," which had been sent by a friend. Never as to-day had she read with such intense interest the lengthened columns. She had heard often of the aching hearts which day by day consult them—she

had laughed with others over their curious history of Wants and Wishes. But to-day she read, with strained attention, the advertisements presented to her view. They suggested the possibility of her doing something, and what so pleasant to an energetic mind as action.

Could she with all her various accomplishments do anything to earn money—to pay her own debt, and to help her father, so that the pressure might be less heavy upon Mark. And then visions arose of the many little bills now always pressing for payment. If she could only pay the smallest of them, it would be better than employing her time in acquiring fresh knowledge. Could she not teach? Would there be any harm in her taking a place as daily governess?

Just then her reverie was interrupted by a double knock at the door, and Mary came to say that Mrs. Harris was in the drawing-room. Not doubting that she was an old friend

from Russell Square, and pleased by her attention, Margaret hurried up stairs to meet her. But she was disappointed to find two ladies who were perfect strangers.

She took her seat, however, after bowing with the kindly politeness natural to her, and then waited to learn their intentions.

Mrs. Harris introduced her daughter, a tall quiet-looking girl, and then said slowly, that she regretted Mrs. Hamilton was out, as she had taken the liberty of calling to say that her daughters had opened a school in Starborne Street, and would be glad to increase their number of pupils.

Margaret replied with much courtesy, that her sisters were finishing their education at home. Mrs. Harris rose politely, said she had no intention of intruding further upon her time, but would leave a card in case of her being able to mention their establishment to any one—casually saying, as she left her, that circumstances had placed them in their present

position, for she had formerly never thought it possible that her daughters would be forced to teach.

Margaret pitied them from her heart. "What!" thought she, "are there other people in this little street struggling as hard as ourselves, and struggling in consequence of 'circumstances?' How many a sad tale does that little word both express and conceal! I believed that all who lived here were in their native element, but perhaps it is not so after all. Poor Mrs. Harris!" she thought; then, turning back to her own restless musings, she replied to them, "no, I fear teaching will not answer, that branch of useful labour is already overstocked even here, and the education of a lady too truly unfits her to take a ready part in the struggle of 'which shall be foremost.'"

Again she took up the supplement, and this time her eye fell upon an advertisement which had attracted her many times before, but not as having any application to herself. Thus it ran:

"PROFITABLE EMPLOYMENT. Illuminating, "working in leather, lithography (drawing on "stone), by which ladies and gentlemen may "earn three pounds weekly, taught by Monsieur "Sorrell, 3, Alpha Place, in six lessons, charge "one guinea. N.B. No knowledge of drawing "required. Pupils in the country taught by "correspondence."

What a charming idea! No knowledge of drawing necessary, surely she might excel in this, for she drew well, and in such an occupation previous knowledge must be an advantage. To earn, too, three pounds a week. One hundred and fifty pounds a year, fifty more than her father earned at the Bank. Would not that be worth working for, for what comfort she might bring him, while how easily she could discharge what was now her own debt. And all this to be obtained by the simple expenditure of one pound, and the task of attending six lessons.

She was impatient until her father returned, and she could have an opportunity of speaking to him. This opportunity, however, did not occur until evening, when she stopped back with him, as was her custom now, while Mrs. Hamilton was preparing for the night, with the assistance of Alice. It was a favourite time with her, because it was usually now a season of peaceful conversation between them, but to-night she was eagerly waiting to introduce the subject.

"Look, Sir," she said as her mother had left the room, "at this advertisement, do you not think it promises fairly?"

"It is too good to be true, I fear," said Mr. Hamilton sighing, "and what have you to do with it, if it is?"

"I should so like to try," she said firmly, "if you do not mind my doing so. I might succeed, you know. Is the neighbourhood respectable?"

"Yes, I think so, the houses are all private,

and I remember Mrs. Stapleworth had apartments there a few years ago."

"Oh yes, I remember; is it there? I should so much like to try this lithography. You cannot think, Sir, how painful it is to do nothing. If I could only earn a few shillings a week, what a blessing it would be, and you see I might earn three pounds."

"I do not believe in it, my dear. Nevertheless, I do believe what you say, that it is painful to be doing nothing. It is taught, he says, by correspondence, but not I suppose very effectually; we can call some morning, and see if the house looks respectable. But we can ill afford even the expenditure of one pound, it seems like throwing good money after bad, I fear."

"I have a pound," said Margaret, her face now all smiles. "Mamma wished me to keep it for winter things; but my straw bonnet will do very well for another six months, and I would much rather put the money out at

interest. Perhaps like Whittington's cat, it will bring home a ship load of gold."

Mr. Hamilton smiled too, though more to see her look of happiness, then at the prospect she conjured up, and yet, in spite of all his worldly learning, he was a simple-hearted man, and more easily duped, perhaps, than the inexperienced girl who stood beside him.

CHAPTER VII.

MARGARET had not thought very precisely of the way in which the employment promised in the advertisement was to be furnished, but when the next day her father started this objection, she determined to write to Monsieur Sorrell.

Accordingly, she despatched a note full of what she believed to be the most cautious questions, and then waited impatiently for the reply.

It came at length.

"Madam,

"By lithography, or working upon stone, three pounds weekly may be easily earned, and from fifteen shillings to thirty shillings a week are guaranteed by this house to proficients. If you are in town, and will favour me with a call, I can explain all this with more satisfaction.

"I am,

"Madam,

"Your obedient servant,

"D. L. SORRELL."

This certainly was rather less assuring than the advertisement itself; but then upon looking again at that, she saw that it said by which three pounds weekly might be obtained. The *might*, of course, made all the difference; but then fifteen to thirty shillings weekly was now guaranteed. This if less flattering was more certain, and with this written guarantee in her possession, and her own sanguine hopes of

success, she urged Mr. Hamilton to promise to accompany her upon the morrow to Alpha Place. No not to-morrow, he must be early, or to speak more truly, he was nervous, and wished to put off going there at all. At length, however, Margaret made him give the required promise.

The next morning, attired in the neatest of all her dresses, and her very sober straw bonnet, she went with him into town.

It was a lovely morning, and even Islington Green looked well as they passed it. But as they left it further and further behind, Margaret began to feel more apprehensive. Was this a prudent measure after all? Mr. Hamilton, now in a hurry to get on to the Bank, gave her little time to think as he hurried her along, until they reached Tottenham Court Road, and then, turning off at Store Street, they found themselves close to a semi-circular row of buildings of dark stone, or, perhaps, more rightly speaking, of composite,

turned black by London smoke. It seemed, indeed, to her a truly dismal and heart-sickening, but, doubtless, a very respectable locality.

Number 3, yes, there it was, and Monsieur Sorrell's name upon the door.

They knocked vigorously, and the door was opened, after a lengthened pause, by a servant, whose face and habiliments were anything but prepossessing, so dirtily and untidily was she dressed.

"Could they see Monsieur Sorrell?" Margaret enquired politely.

She would enquire. "No; Master was busy with his classes."

"She had come a long way to see him, could he not spare a minute to speak with her?"

"Impossible! but he would see her, if she called again at eleven."

Margaret's cheek flushed, but fearing her father might catch the annoyance, she drew out a card from her case, and leaving it, said

she would call to-morrow at eleven, and turned away.

"People who want to work, must not be proud, and must meet difficulties," she said gaily as they walked on, "I rather like his not being too eager to get a pupil, it looks well, do you not think so?"

"It looks very much as if he were afraid of duns," muttered her father, "and I do not feel inclined to have anything more to do with him."

"But there will be no harm in my keeping my appointment if I take Fred with me, will there?" inquired Margaret, with more cheerfulness than she really felt.

"Oh! none at all, I should think," said Mr. Hamilton, glad to be relieved of the business, "you can find your way to the New Road now, and I must hasten on. Good bye, Meg."

And so Mr. Hamilton hurried off with nervous haste, and Margaret, having now no

check for her gloomy mood, fell rapidly into a train of desponding thought, as she turned down the ever busy Tottenham Court Road, and so out into the New Road, with her face towards home. She had been so sanguine that morning, that she was inexpressibly disappointed at not being able to obtain an interview with the man, about whose promise she had thought for the last few days. There was too, although she blinded herself most sedulously to the fact, such an appearance of 'duns' about the house, that she remembered it with a feeling of fear, which she had never before known. The servant, whose dirty face had so daunted her, was suggestive of one who made up for stinted wages by pawning her master's coats; and the very door-steps looked in their utter defiance of the possibility of ever being kept clean, as if they were worn by the feet of those who brought "little accounts," and never succeeded in getting them "settled."

Still she remembered artists were pro-

verbially untidy, and these thoughts might be, nay, they were but the workings of a disordered fancy, which had been strained beyond endurance. How foolish she was. Of course, Monsieur Sorrell was but a lithographer, a common man, no doubt, but honest as the day; a rough good meaning, well intentioned man, who had his way to make and his bread to earn, and she had unjustly been disappointed in not finding the establishment of a gentleman. She was not fit to contend with the world, she was so timid and so easily daunted. Of course, he was not a gentleman, but no one surely could be so cruel, in this the nineteenth century, as to make merchandize of the sufferings of others. For who would seek that door amongst the "ladies and gentlemen" for whom he advertised, but the sorrow stricken. Oh no! Mark would laugh at her, perhaps, but she would go again to-morrow.

The next day with Frederick (who had a holiday) for a companion, Margaret again

called at Monsieur Sorrell's door, and this time, upon sending in her card, she was admitted. The untidy servant escorted them up-stairs to a slovenly furnished drawing-room, which was evidently not used by the household very much, for it was covered up in every possible manner by cloths and papers of different shapes and colours. Margaret was, however, not dissatisfied with this, for the room which was a large one, was well hung with evidently original pictures, in frames equally original, composed, for the most part, of that leather work which is intended to imitate carved oak. Here, too, was an illuminated almanac; and parts of the church service ornamented with great taste and much skilful arrangement of colour. This probably was the kind of work in which she would in future be engaged, and paying to it a ready homage in her own mind, she turned round with a face glowing with her admiration for his art, when the door opened and admitted Monsieur Sorrell.

He was a short, stout man, with a countenance which evidently belonged to the Jewish nation. His black eyes bespoke distrust, while they seemed to say, look at me; though persecuted by the cunning and overreaching of a knavish world, I am still all honesty and truth. His hair was closely interlined with grey, but his deep black eyebrows and beard, still preserved their perfect colour, and contrasted unpleasantly with the lighter pencillings of his hair. His hand was small and fat, and his manner brisk, and business-like; but there was no appearance, and not much pretension of the gentleman about him, either in manner or dress, though, perhaps, in both there was some affectation of the artist.

Margaret, judging that time with such a man, measured as it was by guineas, must doubtless be valuable, briefly explained her business, and Monsieur Sorrell having been graciously pleased to accept her as a pupil, led her up-stairs to his painting room.

Margaret was enchanted. This surely must be an artist's room, it was so very uncomfortable.

There was no carpet, only a piece of loose drugget upon the floor. A plain deal table also, upon which lay books and portfolios, two or three old chairs, and a long desk, which ran across one end of the room to catch as much as possible of the light which the window admitted from above the house-tops. Upon this desk lay some paint saucers, and other implements of the art which Monsieur Sorrell taught.

"You must not despise the lessons I give you," said Monsieur Sorrell, in a half coaxing voice; for something which so indisputably marked the lady was about Margaret, that he seemed at first half afraid of her. "You must not despise them because they seem so simple; everything is easy when we know it."

"Oh! certainly not," said Margaret, politely, while Fred took possession of one of the

chairs, drew it near the fire, and making himself quite at his ease, took an old copy of St. Ronan's Well from his pocket, and began to read.

Monsieur Sorrell in the meanwhile continued to talk.

"Illuminations are," he said, "very much in use now, as you see in the prayer books, and other works of the present day; and ladies of fashion occupy very much time in learning the art. I am now giving lessons to the Baroness de R——; see, this is her doing: I have it to touch up. Is it not beautifully done? You shall copy it when you are further advanced."

"Is this painting necessary," enquired Margaret, "for the study of lithography, which I wish to learn?"

"It is necessary as an introduction certainly, and I wish to teach you to make designs, which is a most lucrative branch of our trade. A frontispiece like this, for instance; here you

see is room for the name of the book, and this illumination round it is very beautiful. Many of these are copied from the illuminated manuscripts in the British Museum, and you see, if you have any talent for the kind of thing, you might alter or add to them, and make something very beautiful."

"And how much could one get by a design such as this?" enquired Margaret, whose debt had made her very mercenary of late.

"Five guineas," said Monsieur Sorrell, "and five guineas for lithographing it."

Margaret's cheek flushed, already the money seemed in her possession.

"Would you like to begin?" he said. "This will be your first trial. Here, you see, is an illuminated O. This is taken from the Museum. See, I put this piece of tissue paper, which is made on purpose for us, and imported from Paris, for nothing so good is made in England; I put this over the letter I wish you to copy, and fasten it with a wafer

to be quite certain it will keep in its place. I then proceed to copy it upon the tissue paper, tracing as lightly as I can, so. Try it. This pencil is, you see, a treble C, and a very good one: the hardest possible."

Margaret, who remembered tracing, as a child, in the same manner, the pictures of gods and goddesses, from a book of Mythology, sat down with some amusement to the task. She had drawn a few lines only, when Monsieur Sorrell pronounced this initiatory lesson over; and fixing the following Thursday for another lesson, bade her trace the illuminated letter as perfectly as she could by that time.

Margaret, therefore, took her leave, feeling rather bewildered by brilliant visions of self-earned wealth, which contrasted somewhat strangely with the simplicity of her first lesson.

On her way homewards, she talked gaily to Fred, and quite delighted him with the vivacity of her conversation. Her warm

and enthusiastic temperament had taken fire with every generous resolve. What was her own comfort and care now, but in working for those dear ones, by poverty rendered doubly dear. The long walk down the New Road seemed, that day, short enough to both of them, though the November fog was already darkening it, even at that early hour of the day. Nor did her energy fail with her walk, for she returned with renewed zest to the studies of her sisters.

Olivia and Alice met her in the study looking as if they had some little secret to tell, which both were anxious to be the first to disclose, but Alice got the advantage.

"A letter came from Aunt Ann, after you left," she said.

Margaret turned pale.

"Is anything the matter?"

"Oh, dear no!" said Olivia, rallyingly. "You always look so agitated now when a letter comes from Aunt Ann. One would

think she had some dreadful secret of yours in her keeping."

"Was there anything particular in the letter?"

"Yes, very particular," said Alice, "a post office order for four pounds, a sovereign a piece, to buy 'tapes and cotton' with."

"Hurrah!" said Frederick, throwing his cap in the air and catching it again. "I will buy some skates, and have such a 'go' on Ball's Pond this winter. Three cheers for Aunt Ann."

"Three cheers indeed," said Margaret, laughing merrily.

"What will you do with your money, then, that it makes you so merry?" said Alice gravely.

"What I have long wished to do. You know how much papa misses seeing new books, and how very important it is that his evenings should be pleasant, because they may make him forget the troubles of the day, and

perhaps he sometimes looks forward to them when he is weary and tired. So now he shall have some new books; for with this," and as she spoke she made the sovereign which Alice had given her, spin upon the table, "I shall subscribe to Mudie's for one year."

"You are always so thoughtful," said Olivia, with a touch of sadness in her tone, "I wish, dear Margaret, we were all as good as you."

"And why not?" said Alice, "Margaret has kindly mentioned this to give us time to imitate her, she is no heroine who tries to stand alone in a generous action. Good deeds are so common with Margaret, that she wishes to give them a higher flavour by making others sharers with her in doing them. You will let us join you, will you not? five shillings and three pence a piece will make an easy guinea for all of us."

"It will certainly give me more pleasure to do it with you than alone, and it will give papa

more pleasure too," said Margaret, who was too pleased to notice the over gravity with which Alice delivered her little speech, "but where is Frederick?"

No one had noticed his departure; but soon afterwards, while they were more fully arranging their little plan, the street door opened and shut with a loud noise, and Fred came bustling down the stairs, and entered the room with a flushed cheek. He had been out for change, and now returning, he placed two half-crowns and a silver three pence in Margaret's hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE few weeks which followed Margaret's first lesson in illuminating, as taught by Monsieur Sorrell, passed rapidly and pleasantly. With the bright elasticity of an ardent mind she undertook this new pursuit, and worked at it with vigour and determination. Visions of coming competency—such competency as would be like wealth to them now, danced before her imagination, and dazzled a judgment naturally strong and well balanced. Gradually, as when rising from the couch of sickness the patient shakes off the remembrance of the pain and weakness which

had laid him low, did she try to banish from her mind that fatal error of her father's which had blanched her cheek and worn down her spirits.

Again the bright colour returned, and the radiant light to her sparkling eyes; again she was heard to mingle her melodious voice in laughing argument with her young brother, and again did she seem to awaken to the beauties of the German poets, which Olivia was now always quoting and praising. Her heart had seemed dead to the voice of melody and gladness, her mind too old to comprehend the enthusiasm of her sisters. Now she had time for everything, and sympathy for every one, even while she worked at her painting, until she seemed giving to it all the intensity of interest, with which the philosopher sought for the means of manufacturing the golden ore.

How fit the comparison, she little thought then. When we remember the mania for this search for gold which took possession of the world of science, only so short a time back as

the days of Förster and Lichtenberg, scarcely more than seventy years since, we must feel that no age of civilization altogether destroys the rage which men have for the marvellous, and the hold which it attains over the mind. When dreams so very absurd have held power over scientific, scrutinizing and intellectual men, we need not wonder that poor Margaret should believe a delusion with such earnest faith, when filial love and every impulse of her warm-hearted affections led her to feel that wealth was the one thing needed to make all smooth around her.

What mattered it that the tax-gatherer, and the rate-collector, found such difficulty in getting money when they stopped at their door in Starborne Street. What did it signify, that the tradesmen received orders in a slovenly manner, or seemed disposed to press for immediate payment; her golden dream would soon be a reality, and she would set all that right give her but time.

It was no pain to her to be at work, she was so happy to be employed. She only asked to be allowed to rob herself of air and exercise so long as the light was bright and clear, and to be permitted to bend in silence over her drawing, which had now become her one absorbing occupation in all the hours which her other duties permitted her to call her own.

She had now fallen into the habit of going to take her lessons alone, for Alice and Olivia were always so busy with their books, and Frederick was at school; but she did not mind this now, for Monsieur Sorrell received her in such a fatherly way, that she felt quite at home with him. They fell into long talks now upon the struggles of life and its many difficulties, and above all, of the pleasure of surmounting them by honest toil, and Margaret congratulated herself, that she had escaped from many of the usual hardships which beset the well born, when trying the very novel task of earning money. So bene-

volent a man, so kind an adviser, had surely fallen in her way on purpose to mitigate her lot. How her affectionate heart blessed and praised you, poor man, it would bring you shame to know!

In this state of happy credulity, the six lessons were soon finished, or they seemed soon, though taken at such long intervals that spring had grown into summer while she worked at them; and autumn damp, and muddy, and foggy, and sloshy, and dark, and dispiriting had come again. It was then that the conviction gradually forced itself upon her, that she had been learning all this time little or nothing, at least, nothing but the art of transferring a tolerable drawing from one piece of cardboard to another, with great labour and pains, it is true, but with no great difficulty or artistic display, and this certainly was not all she had come to learn.

Then Monsieur Sorrell explained in the simplest and apparently most straightforward

manner, that another six lessons were required to make her a real worker! She had gone too far to recede now, she thought; and with his praises for her encouragement, but with a less sanguine spirit, she entered upon the second course. It did occur to her that it would have been more honest, and almost equally attractive, if his advertisement had said that his art could be taught in twelve lessons for two guineas; but she could not bear to think she had been deceived, and so tried to go on as steadily as before.

As steadily indeed she did work, but the sanguine hopes which had enlivened her before, but rarely visited her now; and in exchange for the confidence which she had reposed in the character of the artist, unpleasant suspicions arose in her own mind, which, perhaps, began to shew themselves in the increased reserve of her manner. To this reserve she would again attribute the certainly altered tone of Monsieur Sorrell's

instructions, and then would try to be with him as cordial as before. But it would not do. Many things forced themselves upon her attention now, which at first she had disregarded, believing them to be only the natural accompaniments of an artist's life, and remembering also, how limited her knowledge of the world must be, confined as it had been in the days of their prosperity to "the best society," a circle which, wide as it may sometimes seem, is narrow indeed when compared with the world at large. To know something of the classes, which like the widening circles that spread around the single one, formed by the stone's striking the clear surface of the lake, was a matter of interest to her, and the family of Monsieur Sorrell had been one of her first studies.

Much had she wondered at the discrepancies she met with in their style of living and dress, and marvelled more at the curious order of society of which she did not doubt

they formed a representative part. Miss Sorrell or Mademoiselle Sorrell, perhaps, more properly speaking, (for they seemed as mongrel in their nationality as in everything else) Mademoiselle Sorrell, however, in greater politeness, was sometimes to be seen with shoes down at heel, hair in entangled papers, and gown of the Cinderella cast, performing some domestic office in a slovenly manner; at others, she might be found superb in a jacket of purple velvet, and a manner which but feebly represented her contempt for "papa's pupils," or the scorn with which she met the necessity of occasionally opening the door, to admit the lady who had the impertinence to have once been in better circumstances. Oh, poverty! thou wert a weariness and a heavy burden to the noble-hearted being, who then so painfully, and yet so uncomplainingly subjected herself to pass over this ignoble threshold!

Master Sorrell, a youth of sixteen, was

another of Margaret's speculations; he was occasionally so fine, and wore such magnificent watch-guards, and yet was so often arrayed like a foot-boy out of place, and out at elbows too, that she could not understand him at all. She had amused herself before in watching his changeable style of dress, but now it became a witness, with many other things, against the integrity of his father, and the boy's Jewish features, and uncertain manners annoyed her, and fretted her in her visits to the studio in Alpha Place.

At last she began to perceive that Monsieur Sorrell's manner became more and more cool, and sometimes she thought she had committed a fatal error in confessing herself poor, and in speaking of her father at all. Few men have such a contempt for those who have been unfortunate, or have fallen in the world, as those who have risen in it by their own merit, or hardihood, or cunning. Vulgar minds have almost certainly a contempt for misfortune, and regard it as a crime, however undeserved.

Vulgar minds! What, the artist in his painting room, had he a vulgar mind? Poor Margaret was beginning to suspect as much, for she chafed under the now almost contemptuous pity with which he enquired for her "poor father," and would have resented it with bitter indignation, but that this man had placed the charm of dependence upon her which she could not resist.

Meanwhile, in the narrow circle of her home all went well. Unconsciously, her mother had shared her day dreams, and Mr. Hamilton, though he smiled, believed that Margaret's strong common sense would never suffer her entirely to fail in anything.

The subscription to Mudie's Library proved a great boon. It was the first thing which awoke in Mr. Hamilton's mind the feeling that it was not absolutely necessary to make poverty and failure as uncomfortable as possible. It was not, certainly, like reading in his luxurious arm-chair in the Carlton, but it was a return to the amenities of life, to walk briskly

down Oxford Street, and call for the last new book, or to bring home with him the last new "Edinburgh," on the very day of its publication, with its leaves yet uncut.

Those who have studied the human mind attentively, know what very small things lead to great changes in feeling. They are often so small, that when the change is effected, the cause is quite eclipsed, and yet the cause has been, imperceptible as it may now seem.

This simple act of kindness upon his children's part, did Mr. Hamilton more good than the four sovereigns put together and spent upon good dinners would have done. He was fond of light reading, and was not sorry to feel himself still master of the latest literature of his favourite class. It reminded him that he had the tastes of a gentleman, and it re-awakened his pride in himself, or rather, that amount of self-love which it is fatal policy to cast aside.

To rekindle this healthy self-respect, had

been Margaret's anxious wish for many months, and she now earnestly endeavoured to turn from her own disappointment, to aid this new feeling, so that no sigh, or downcast look of hers might betray the anxiety, which as a mother's care for her nursling, she felt for all with such intensity.

One night, Mr. Hamilton said to her, when they met before dinner.

"I went to Sorrell's to-day trying to meet you, but found you were gone. I wanted you to walk with me as I had a little leisure."

"I am so sorry; if I had only known it, I could so easily have waited for you there."

"By the bye," rejoined Mr. Hamilton, "I paid the second guinea, so mind, you owe him nothing."

"It was very good of you, dear papa," she said, looking rather concerned, "but why? for I have not finished my lessons yet, I have four more to take."

"Mrs. Sorrell told me the money was due, and asked for it, and as I had money with me I did not like to refuse, and so paid it."

Margaret's countenance fell with a foreboding she did not like to express. This was another link in a chain of evidence which was perplexing her not a little.

The next time she went to Alpha Place, she was kept waiting a long time, and when at length she saw Monsieur Sorrell, he told her that he had struck off a lithograph from her stone, but it was so bad that she must really take more pains.

"Could she see it?" she timidly enquired, daunted by the blustering air he used.

He had mislaid it. She persisted, and it was found at length and handed brusquely to her. Another stone should be sent to her address, and she could try again if she liked. Yes, she would gladly do so; she felt she must not offend him, or all hope of getting the employment guaranteed in his letter would fail.

How miserable she felt going home that day, the dark houses along the New Road seemed but the picture of her present and her future. They looked so very desolate.

She heard nothing from Monsieur Sorrell, and at length she summoned courage to call again. How could she have ventured out in such weather, he asked. Surely, he observed, testily, she must have known nothing could be done upon such a cold foggy day. The ink would freeze before the brush reached the stone. She went home reproved, her heart strong in its purpose was giving way at last. She had noticed the impertinent stare which Miss Sorrell had given her as she opened the door in her purple jacket, and the studied forgetfulness of Master Sorrell, who had shoes on that afternoon, and not slippers too small for his feet as he more familiarly approved.

The stone which Monsieur Sorrell had promised her did not arrive; she wrote but received no answer, she did so again and again with the same effect. He seemed to have forgotten

her, and the talent she had displayed in her earlier lessons had strangely died away it seemed, for it called for no attention now. Monsieur Sorrell had, indeed, told her that he had taught her all he knew, and that the rest remained with herself to acquire exactitude by practice; but there was no surprise excited, seemingly, by her not having perfected herself. Margaret had said in one of her letters that she was now anxious to complete her lessons, by which time, she hoped, he would be able to give her some simple work which would afford both practice and remuneration. It seemed, considering the terms of the advertisement and his own private letter, but a reasonable request, yet it remained unanswered; and she could see, but too evidently, that there was a desire to break up all communication between them, without the somewhat uncomfortable necessity of an explanation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE winter proved one of unusual severity. To the Hamiltons, accustomed as they had been to their heated houses and luxurious attendance, which supplied every need, it seemed harder than any which had preceded it. It was pitiless out of doors, where beggars waited shivering at every corner.

And now their winter boots and shoes began to wear out, and show signs of that poverty which watched and closed in upon them at every turn Those who from infancy had never known a real personal want which

money could purchase, had to fight this poverty hand to hand now. It was no unfaithful looking for of coming want, that bugbear of the mind, it was the close sharp encounter with want itself which they had now to endure. Not of that want which figures in the corners of newspapers, and freezes the very blood to read of; and yet none the less real, because day after day, month after month, brought enough to keep up the struggle, and no more.

The coal-cellar was next in locality to the little down stairs sitting-room in Starborne Street, the rightful destination of which still remained a mooted question between Mary and Fred. How harshly fell the grating sound, caused by the fetching of coals from this receptacle, upon the ears of those who felt as if the filling of every fresh scuttle, was but another step towards ruin.

Mr. Hamilton noted that grating sound often, and as he listened he would lean his

head upon the mantel-shelf and seem lost in sad reflections. How often then would Margaret's arm steal round his neck, as leaning down to kiss him, she, reading his thoughts by her own, would whisper some loving words of hope and peace—hope which her faithful heart held still amidst the darkness. To keep him up was her chief effort now, to lavish more and more of her love upon him in proportion as the world around them grew more cold.

The energy with which Alice and Olivia pursued their studies during this winter, had in it something painful. Their luxurious home had been broken up, but the fact seemed never to have penetrated them further, than as it removed from them their fashionable governess and the daily staff of masters. They had borne everything else with philosophy, but in this they felt a little jealousy of Margaret, who had been "finished" in their rich days, and shewed it by the martyr-like

fortitude with which they tasked their brains with an excessive and impatient course of study. They submitted to the loss of wealth, but they took care to shew every day how much additional pains it cost them, and while they did so, they exalted "their education" into a matter of the first importance. Important it was, of course, but as they followed it then, it became but a selfish shutting out from themselves of the trouble which, by sharing, they might have lightened.

"How silly it is of Margaret to work so at that stupid stone," Olivia observed to Alice while drawing together; the two girls were working as if life depended upon the correctness of their copies. Margaret had just passed from the room, her fingers dead with cold from the stone she was painting upon, and her cheeks and forehead burning with unnatural heat from the stooping posture she had held for a lengthened time.

"She will never make anything of it," said

Alice, shortly, as she touched up a chimney with a self-satisfied air. "It is a pity she frets so, it makes her look quite sallow, and so much older than she need—"

"Surely not old," said Olivia, looking up.

"Older than she need be," said Alice, "I said. I wish I had had her chances in life. I confess, I would have made something of them."

"Chances of what?" said Olivia.

Alice only gave a little toss of her head and went on with her chimney; but presently she enlightened her by the following observation.

"I have often heard mamma say, that if a girl does not marry, or get engaged before she is twenty, she has lost her best chance."

"Oh!" laughed Olivia, "if that be all, we shall all three be in the same predicament, I doubt not, for no 'lord or squire' is likely to seek us here."

"Perhaps not," said Alice, with a quiet smile.

"And all the better," said Olivia, stopping to kiss her sister enthusiastically. "I should break my heart if we were to be separated—if you were to be married."

"There is no fear of it," said Alice, coolly, suffering the embrace, "if that be the only contingency which is to break it, your heart will remain whole."

"I am glad of it," said Olivia. "Who could be happier than we have been this quiet snug winter, with nothing to disturb us."

Ah, Olivia! your heart would have been better if it had not been quite so happy, with so much trouble about and around you. It was not resignation, though you may think so, it was simply forgetfulness; and a shifting on to others' shoulders of the burden you should have helped to bear.

Alice made no reply, she was unwilling to disturb Olivia's dream, although it is probable she was beginning to awake from her own, to the conviction that Tasso, and Dante, and

Hume, and Robertson, though very well in their way, could not altogether supply the needs and necessities of life.

And so time again passed on. Margaret had written repeatedly for more work to Monsieur Sorrell, from whom no answer could be obtained; and now the days moved heavily, for, her absorbing occupation removed, she had nothing which could serve to divert her thoughts. The conviction slowly forced itself upon her, that she had been duped; and she looked back with regret not only upon the time she had wasted, but upon the energies she had so lavishly expended upon the art which had failed her.

There might, however, still be some mistake. Monsieur Sorrell might be too busy to write, or even to think of her (he had never been too busy before). She remembered stories of the cruel masters of slop-shops, who were so hard to move when money became a question, and who needed so much pressing and entreaty.

And should she see the lines grow plainer and deeper day by day upon her father's forehead, and be too proud to press a little, just a little, more. Thinking of him, it seemed so easy to entreat, to be enthusiastic, eloquent, winning; but thinking of Monsieur Sorrell, and the Jewish features of his son, how her heart sank within her!

To walk up the busy Tottenham Court Road would be in itself an effort. To stop in Alpha Place, and look round at its stern, unsympathising buildings, to ring at the bell, and, perhaps, receive no answer until her voice trembled so that she could hardly frame the necessary question, were things she contemplated with a sensation approaching sickness.

Still she would go, but it could not be alone. "Would Alice go?" she asked one day.

"You always go alone," was the reply, "and it is hardly worth while for both of us to waste our time."

Margaret made no reply, she was in no

mood for argument, and although she knew that if she repeated her request, Alice would probably yield and go with her, she merely turned her eyes, already filling with tears, towards the fire. It was true, Alice was very busy, while she was doing nothing.

"I'll go with you, Margaret," broke in Fred, who had seen more of her vexation than he chose to remark upon. "I've a half holiday the day after to-morrow, and we'll walk to Alpha Place, and then, when you have had your lesson, we will go on to the Serpentine, won't we; for I want to have a skate there, and you can see the skating club. Shall we do that?"

"Gladly," said Margaret, turning with a smile to her boy brother, "if you will promise not to fall into the water, and frighten me to death. I will post a letter to Monsieur Sorrell presently, and if he cannot receive me, he will have ample time to write."

The note was written and posted, and no

answer arriving, Margaret could not but conclude that she should take her lesson without further difficulty. Accordingly she determined to be very brave, and wrapping herself up as warmly as she could, they started upon their expedition, purchasing from the shop which gave something like animation to the corner of Starborne Street, two very hard and impenetrable biscuits by way of luncheon upon the road. Fred carried his skates in high glee, and rattled on so merrily, that she had great difficulty in keeping up with his joyous spirit. She felt herself so sad, so dispirited, so apprehensive, that at every step they took upon the road, she felt willing to turn back, and give up the attempt for ever.

Once more they passed up Tottenham Court Road, and anxious, as always before, to dissipate her thoughts, she read one after another the figures upon the cheap priced furniture, although she already knew them almost by heart. But even this diversion was

soon over, for they had reached Alpha Place now, and stood upon the well known door step.

They were admitted, and shown to the drawing-room, but not as formerly to the painting room. Master Sorrell it was who conducted them upstairs.

He said his father was engaged, and she replied that she would wait. And wait they did until Frederick was quite impatient, since having examined every picture and criticized every ornament in the room, he was forced to content himself with kicking his heels one against another, for however artistic the drawing-room might have seemed to Margaret's prejudiced eyes, when first introduced to it, its appearance was by no means prepossessing now. Bearing in its open features (as rooms generally do) the characteristics of its owners, it looked now all empty show and profession, with nothing comfortable or real in it. The would be oak

picture frames looked very much like failures in the unflattering light of the cold winter morning, and the bright paper ornaments, decorating the stove, appeared anything but cheering upon a day when the thermometer was ten degrees below the freezing point, and when the long icicles which hung about the window-frame, looked so suggestive of a comfortable fire.

To Fred's credit be it recorded, that he uttered no exclamation of weariness, although he saw in bright perspective the Serpentine covered with skaters.

At length Margaret became impatient and rang the bell. Master Sorrell answered it, holding the door open as he did so, with the air of a footboy who was about to receive his dismissal.

"When will your father be disengaged?" enquired Margaret, angrily.

"I do not know," replied the youth, looking as if, if she were prepared to scold, he was

waiting to hear, only he hoped she would not be very long about it, that was all. Margaret could not help thinking of the censure passed upon him by his father, who said that he was anxious to enter the law, because he had a taste for its roguish practices.

"I wrote to say I should come to-day," said Margaret, "he might have told me if he had an engagement."

"I heard nothing of it," replied the young gentleman, "perhaps he did not know he should be engaged. He has some gentlemen with him now."

"How long do you expect they will remain? Could you tell him I am here?"

"Could not venture to do such a thing," he said, with a lurking impertinence in his eye.

"When did you say these gentlemen would leave?"

"Not for some hours I expect, and then my father is to go into the city. Would you like to wait, you are quite welcome?"

"No," said she rising. "Your father is afraid to see me."

Then half frightened at having given any expression to her feelings, and remembering that her only companion was a boy too young to protect her from insolence, she passed Master Sorrell without speaking, and guided by some vague terror which she could not well explain, yet walking with great dignity all the time, she was not at all sorry to find herself in the open air.

Frederick divined something of what she was feeling, perhaps, when he expressed his deep regret at not being able to "pitch into that young Jew," but he begged her to come to the Serpentine, and forget it all.

Margaret longed to be at home, and shut in her own room, where she might give vent to the passionate burst of tears, which she was now so steadily suppressing, but she knew the uncertainty of ice as well as Fred-

erick did, and was well assured that this was not a case, when another day would do as well; she therefore quickened her pace as he desired, and set off for the Serpentine.

CHAPTER X.

A BRISK walk had brought Margaret and her brother to the bridge which crosses the Serpentine, and forms one of the boundaries of Kensington Gardens.

It was freezing fast, and the sun which had been shining gaily all the morning, was no longer visible, yet nothing seemed needed to add animation to the scene. The trees upon all sides were white with the hoar frost of the morning, and looked like an enchanted wood, in some fairy story. The short blades of grass were crisp with frost, and the ground was hard and pleasant to walk upon. The

river was covered with a clear sheet of ice, smooth as glass, for there had been neither snow nor thaw to mar it. Near the bridge, where the ice was probably at its best, a large ring had been formed, which was carefully preserved by the attendants of the skating club. Here the gentlemen, who composed it, were in active exercise, performing figures and intersecting each other with more easy grace than the ball-room often affords.

There is generally one best dancer in a ball-room, one best speaker at a public meeting, and one best singer at an evening party. There was certainly a best skater in the ring that afternoon.

This gentleman was in evening dress, according to the fashion of the club, and he wore white gloves as for a dance. He was a perfect master of the exercise in which he was engaged, and went through the most difficult figures without the derangement of a muscle of his face, or the appearance of the slightest

effort. He was decidedly a good-looking man, his eyes were large and penetrating, and his black hair, though interlined with grey, was still smooth and luxuriant. If his forehead too bore the traces of time and thought, it was broad and high, and its lines running as straight as Lavater himself could desire, marked the strong intellect of the man.

His beard and whiskers, of the same colour as his hair, were full but carefully trimmed, and contrasted with the extreme smoothness of the upper part of the chin, allowing a very well formed mouth to shew itself to advantage. His teeth were white and regular. His nose would also have suited Lavater's taste, being long and shapely, though not quite so prominent a feature of his face, as the good physiognomist's own.

The expression of his whole countenance spoke of serious thought, at once equally removed from the comic, and the melancholy. Scarcely above the middle

height, his chest was broad and expansive, his limbs muscular, and his foot and hand peculiarly well formed, not small, but in keeping with the look of strength, both of mind and body which particularly marked him. He was now slightly flushed with pleasure and exercise, and the exultation usually felt by the knowledge of excellence, whether confessed or not.

He was as we have before said, the best skater in the ring, and the idle but musing spectator, while looking on there, would assuredly make him the hero of the passing half hour.

Margaret watched him with pardonable admiration. Neither accident nor caprice had led her to the river in a frost before, and she now looked with interest upon an amusement which was almost entirely new to her. If she too made him the hero of a half hour's romance, she may be forgiven since she never thought of making herself the heroine, she

looked upon him indeed with a kind of regret. He belonged to the society from which she had fallen, to a past to which there was now no returning. Men like him she might have once met and conversed with, but they were not frequenters of Islington, not, at least, of Islington as it was to her. He was one of a separate sphere, and between them there was as wide a division as if he had been a creature of air or flood.

But there were other rings besides this one, where tyroes in the art were showing off their attitudes. Here one made himself hot in the face, as if in instant danger of convulsions, while another as he amused himself, gave way to the dejection of a man at the treadmill. One bent his body as if determined that if he fell, it should be upon his nose, while another placed his feet much in the attitude of Pickwick, when he "kept up the steam" in such glorious fashion.

Further on again, long slides were marked

out, and boys and men followed each other with the utmost rapidity. While sometimes a stout gentleman, remembering his boyish agility would follow their lead, looking round after he had done so in a kind of apologetic manner; and at others it was enlivened by the screams and laughter of women, tempted by some facetious friend to try their fortunes on the smooth slide.

Everywhere there was a sound of merry making. Jokes were given and taken; witticisms were indulged in, and the ice, cold as it is in its own nature, produced nothing but the most genial warmth of temper and feeling.

Margaret could not help thinking, as she stood watching, that it must be very sad to die amidst such sounds of merriment and laughter and nonsense, and that death must form a strange contrast indeed to such a scene of gaiety.

Frederick had meanwhile donned his skates,

after using extraordinary exertions in fastening the straps, and with many anxious cautions from Margaret, he had joined the second ring, and out of hearing, though not out of sight, he was now shewing his skill with no discredit to himself, though with the occasional chance of a fall, from which, however, he rallied with as much rapidity as good-humour.

Margaret remained by the side of the water walking as rapidly as the slippery nature of the ground would allow her to do, but oftener stopping to watch her brother, and to assure herself that he was safe, for she had much more fear for him than she dared avow, lest his manliness should be offended.

When she stopped for about the twentieth time, she perceived that the hero of the club, whom she had invested with a passing interest, was sitting down and disencumbering himself of his skates. She was about to move on, feeling timid from being alone, and anxious

to escape all observation, when she saw her brother fall, and a moment afterwards the ice was in confusion, and a crowd (which in London never takes more than a few moments to form), gathered round the spot and shut him from her view.

Margaret turned pale with apprehension, and with a faint scream, she sprang forwards upon the ice. But the stranger gentleman was by her side in an instant, and his strong grasp upon her arm she felt had saved her from falling.

Totally unaccustomed to ice, and sensible at once of her inability to walk upon it, she looked up eagerly at him crying piteously, as he led her back.

"What can I do? it is my poor brother."

"Stay here, and I will go to him," he said soothingly, "be assured I will do all you could desire to have done, and more than any efforts of your own could effect."

He hurried forwards to the spot. The

time seemed immeasurably long to Margaret, after she had seen him disappear in the crowd; but it could not have been many minutes before he re-appeared carrying Fred in his arms. He walked with steady steps, being now free of his skates, and when he reached her, he rested the boy's weight a little upon the ground, by bending upon one knee, without removing him from his arms.

"He has broken his leg, I am afraid," he said in a low voice, as Margaret bent eagerly over him, "and he is exhausted from the heaviness of the fall, that is all. You are not going to faint, my man, are you?"

"Oh no, Sir!" Frederick said instantly, and Margaret was reassured by the sound of his voice.

"Do you live far from here?" enquired the stranger.

"Oh, yes, a long way—at Islington," said Margaret hopelessly. "Ought I to take him home, or have him carried to a doctor?"

"Let me go home," said Frederick, who was not yet too old to believe that no one could nurse him so well as his mother.

"Home then, my man, you shall go, it may be the wisest plan, and it need not take very long. Put your arm round my neck fast, there, now I think I can carry you."

Margaret followed him, thanking him fervently but timidly, while the little crowd dispersed and hurried back again to the ice.

The stranger gentleman, with Fred in his arms, now chose the pathway under the bridge, and walked on towards the Receiving House, where several carriages were waiting, but no cab, as Margaret knew could be there, and she instantly interposed.

"No cabs are allowed here, and I have no carriage."

"But I have," he replied, "and you must let me drive you to Islington. You are not afraid to trust me," he added quickly, and

turning for an instant, so as to face her directly.

"I shall be only too grateful for your kindness," said Margaret fervently.

"That is right," said he, as he strode on, "we understand each other."

Shall it be recorded that at that moment, Margaret, in spite of the little timidity she felt, was relieved by the thought that she should not have to settle with a rapacious cabman. Alas! she had learnt that a few miles cab hire purchases the necessary joint of meat which would feed a whole hungry party for several days, and that a hasty demand for five or six shillings would, on her return home, greatly enhance the real sorrow caused by poor Fred's distressing accident.

"There are few things which I despise more," said her companion, "than conventionality."

"Then I think you are wrong," said Margaret frankly, "what you term conventionality

is of great use in society, and, perhaps in our whole lives, there may be only two or three occasions when it may be safely set aside."

"And this is one of them," said he.

"Nay," said she, "conventionality itself would not be offended at my accepting gratefully a kindness so frankly offered, when to refuse, would but subject my brother to needless pain, and perhaps to danger."

She spoke more calmly now, and with that perfect self-possession, which perhaps is only thoroughly enjoyed by those who have been initiated into the 'savoir faire' of society, or by those who are altogether beneath its influence.

They now reached the lines of carriages, and he walked directly to his cab, which was drawn by a high-spirited horse, now held by a groom in plain green livery, whose features appeared so well drilled into a perfect indifference to everything, that he evinced no surprise at seeing his master advance with his heavy burden.

"Will you be kind enough to arrange these wrappers so as to form a support for his leg," said the master rapidly, addressing Margaret, "for my man cannot leave the horse's head, till I have the reins."

She did as he desired quickly and effectually, and taking her seat in the carriage at his bidding, he placed the boy by her side, so that she could partly support and steady him. Then getting in himself, he seized the reins, the groom jumped up behind, and after a little curvetting, the horse went off like the wind.

"Now for a race," he said, "every moment is of consequence when a fracture may be swelling, and no doctor is at hand. You are not afraid," he added, turning to Margaret, who seemed wholly occupied with her brother's pain.

"Oh! not in the least," she said quite easily, "but I have not driven so fast since—"

At the end of that time, a carriage and pair drove quickly up to the door, with all the rattle and business appearance of a doctor's equipage.

Poor Mrs. Hamilton ran to the window, thinking, notwithstanding her anxiety for her boy's safety, that such a carriage must demand a proportionate fee. She uttered a joyful exclamation, however, as she saw her old and experienced friend, Dr. Arden, a surgeon of note, get down and enter the house.

"Mrs. Hamilton," he said, when they met upon the stairs, "how delighted I am to see you. A friend met me on the road, and sent me here. Heh! what is the matter," he said, "something of a broken limb. These youngsters will be getting into mischief."

"I cannot tell you the relief I receive from the very sight of your face, Dr. Arden," said Mrs. Hamilton, briefly explaining the accident, as she led him to the poor boy's room.

"It might have been worse, and it might have been better," said Mr. Arden, as he examined the broken limb, and then proceeded to set it with the skill for which he was famous.

When this operation had been performed, and Fred was laid quietly in the position which he would be compelled to keep, Mrs. Hamilton called Margaret from the room, and the consequence of her whispered directions was, that Margaret followed Dr. Arden down stairs, when he had taken leave of her mother, who returned again to the sick room.

"I cannot sufficiently thank you for your kindness in coming," she said, as she detained him in the sitting-room. "You think that now that the bone has been set by you, he will do well, do you not?" she said anxiously, "and that we may safely trust him to some surgeon in this neighbourhood."

"He will do quite well with careful watching, and the medicine I have prescribed until

to-morrow morning, when I will, by all means, look in as early as I can get over."

"You think this absolutely necessary," said Margaret, remembering the splendid fees her father had been in the habit of paying him.

"Why are you so anxious to get rid of me, my dear young lady," he said, taking her hand, and looking her earnestly in the face.

"Nay," said she smiling in reply, even while a bright blush mantled her face, "let me finish the business which mamma has sent me upon," and she opened her hand, where, in bright sovereigns was the fee, suited rather to their former circumstances than their present one, for Mrs. Hamilton never forgot that they had been in the habit of spending so many thousands per annum, upon any occasion like this, when she almost regarded it as mean to economize.

"My dear young lady," said Dr. Arden earnestly, as instead of keeping the fee, he

bent back her white fingers tightly upon it. "Do not think that in the hour of adversity I *could* take money from so old a friend as your father. Indeed, my dear, I have been poor myself, and never thought it shame to accept a helping hand from him who could afford to give it to me. Set his excellent heart at rest upon that score, and tell him he shall pay me with interest when he is in his own bank again. And now you will let me come to-morrow without any black looks, and so I charge myself with this boy's recovery."

Margaret bent her head gracefully over the hand which was holding hers, and pressed it reverently as a kind of homage for his generosity.

Dr. Arden seized both her hands, gave them a hearty shake, and hurried off to his carriage.

Late in the evening, utterly wearied by the events of the day, Margaret sat in the little study down stairs. She like all the rest of

the family, had been occupied with thoughts of Frederick, but now too tired to take another journey up-stairs, and knowing that he had nurses enough, she was reclining in the large arm-chair, her head resting wearedly upon her hand, and her deep sparkling eyes fixed upon the fire which stood in much need of replenishment, though she seemed to feel the exertion of putting on the coals beyond her at that moment. Her father had been detained in town, and the thought that it rested with her to tell him of the accident did not raise her spirits.

In spite of that vein of strong common sense for which all her friends were ready to give her credit, Margaret was becoming nervous and depressed. There are seasons of the mind, when we accept failure with a kind of dull desolation which well nigh threatens to crush our hearts, as if fate were against us and there is no turning it. Nothing can serve us then but a very strong religious

principle, a determination to accept suffering as the fiery furnace which is heated to try and not to consume us. But were this strong principle in active existence, the trial might be unnecessary. We are most of us, indeed, but weak and varying, and do we not "suffer" that we may be "strong." Reason tells us so, but often we heed her not, the world seems to us a blank, our own struggling efforts but repeated failures, while we look to Heaven, and find no answer.

Her thoughts reverted sadly to Monsieur Sorrell, and to the golden dreams which had that day been so effectually dissipated, for to go there again she felt would be but to subject herself to insolence, and yet she had laid some of the lithographic drawings upon the table, and looked at them sometimes sadly enough.

Presently her brother Mark came in, he had been up-stairs sitting with Frederick. Saying the night was bitterly cold, he proceeded to make up the fire, arranging the nobs of coal

with care, and then sat down by it with the poker in his hand, ready to give it a stir as soon as it should be able to bear it.

"Fred has been telling me all your adventures this morning, though I did my best to keep him from talking," he said at length.

"Did he tell you," said Margaret, trying to smile, "of his wish to 'pitch' into young Sorrell?"

"A feeling which I shared with him," said Mark, "I hope you are not very disappointed."

"Yes, I am indeed, and the more so that though my reason tells me that I have been taken in, I yet feel that it was my want of skill. I feel puzzled, indeed; if I could have completely detected him as an impostor, my vanity would not have suffered so much."

"Can you doubt it," said he, looking up from the cheerlessly black fire, which he had so carefully tended, "was it reasonable to

suppose that an easy income of a hundred and fifty, or at the very worst, five and twenty a year, equal to the salary of many a poor governess could be earned at the costly price of one guinea. There was deception upon the very face of it. No doubt lithography may be a lucrative art, but depend upon it, it is only learnt by long and careful teaching, like any other art or trade. This Sorrell is no doubt a cunning man, (clever I will not call him), for he has known how to appeal to one of our very peculiar weaknesses. Human nature loves to believe that she can achieve great ends at small pains. But there is nothing to be acquired without labour. That is the lot of man. Most assuredly nothing which can earn money, can be learnt without long and steady application. I very much doubt whether you learnt to play your scales in six lessons. I am certain they did not take you far in the harp or piano."

"Granted! but this does not much relieve

me. It seems, then, impossible for a lady to earn money."

"If you put it as a general question," said Mark gravely, "I should be puzzled to find an answer; and yet, were I called upon to particularize, I think I could meet the difficulty."

"Meet it then as regards myself?"

"Well then, since you bid me do so, I will say that the surest way is by the most rigorous economy. To an enthusiastic mind like yours, this is but a depressing remedy, and yet, believe me, it is the righteous one. Not only must you deny yourself, but you must enforce the same systematic unvarying economy in everything and by everybody. You will find the effect in time, and in practising it, your energetic mind, which sometimes carries away your common sense by its very ardour, will learn a more serious discipline than the hardest work would bring it."

In all he said he never glanced at himself

or his own fruitless patience. There was no selfish allusion, no impatient word, no murmur whatever.

Then he inserted the poker skilfully between the bars of the grate, and gently raised the coals. A bright flame shot up instantly, throwing its glare round the room, and dancing with flickering light along the walls.

"See," he said smiling, "it is good to be patient."

CHAPTER XI.

To say that Mark's advice had opened a new train of thought to Margaret would not be correct. And yet the subject had only been vaguely dealt with so long as the scheme for making money had possessed her. Now that this had failed, economy appeared more than ever important. They had certainly tried hard to be economical; but something, it may be, in the fashion of Dickens' "Micawber." What was saved to-day, was spent in some act of mismanagement or extravagance on the morrow, or one act of expenditure was

ruled by parsimony, another by ultra liberality. The Hamiltons had been accustomed to such an entirely different style of living, that in their new position they were almost as puzzled as they would have been, had they found themselves upon the Island of Juan Fernandez.

As a rule, few accommodate themselves so well to reverses as the rich and well educated, but the Hamiltons were an exception to the rule.

Perhaps the reason lay very much in the fact, that ceasing to be the rich banker, Mr. Hamilton became nothing. Though of a most respectable family, he was neither titled, nor highly connected; ceasing to be rich, the Hamiltons possessed nothing which could dignify their poverty, but their individuality.

Some two or three weeks after Fred's accident, Mrs. Hamilton and her daughters were working in the study, Fred himself was in the charge of Mr. Hamilton, who was beguiling

his weary imprisonment by playing chess with him; and Mrs. Hamilton who seldom left the sick room, had been prevailed upon to come down for a little change.

It was still cold, and the fire burnt brightly; but there seemed a hope now that the frost was breaking up, and that spring was coming at last.

They were working in silence, in thoughtful silence, for Mrs. Hamilton had started some subject of domestic economy, intimately connected with the brilliant and somewhat extravagant flame now dancing up the chimney with such a cheering crackling noise.

Margaret was the first to break the painful silence.

"I wish, mamma, you would let us keep house for you by turns, and take the trouble off your hands. You have not been used to saving pence, and we ought to learn how to do so now."

"I think," said Mrs. Hamilton severely, "that I know more about it than you do. When do I spend a penny more than I need? I wish, indeed, you would look at home. The money you wasted upon that drawing would have been very useful now."

Margaret did not attempt to answer this charge, for she had previously determined to have her own way, and she knew that that is seldom, if ever, obtained by argument; she therefore remained silent, knowing that the proposition might be left to make its own way.

"How very amusing it would be, mamma," said Olivia, with all the freshness of youth enlisted in favour of a new scheme. "I should so enjoy trying to make the money last, and having the power to impose a fast whenever it was likely to fail. A bad dinner would be only funny then."

"Not in papa's eyes," said Alice solemnly, "we must not give him a bad dinner for fun."

"No, not exactly," said Olivia, "but the housekeeper should be the carver, and then one could always manage to help him plentifully, and finesse the rest."

"Well," observed Alice, "I think it would teach us to keep house, if it did no more; and this, of course, is an important part of education."

"Undoubtedly," said Margaret, suppressing a smile, "some people go so far as to consider that it is the ultimatum of a woman's education."

"But that cannot be correct," said Alice seriously, and evidently prepared to take up the cudgels in favour of woman's rights. "Only consider her high position as a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother."

Upon every word Alice laid an additional stress, until her emphasis upon the word mother, had something quite awful in it.

Nobody opposing this line of argument, it naturally fell to the ground, and, at length, Mrs. Hamilton said quite contentedly:

"Well, my dears, if you think really as a matter of education it would be serviceable, I really have no objection to try you, under my especial direction, of course. If so, it will be necessary to fix upon the exact sum to be spent in the week, and never to exceed it."

Margaret's heart bounded. She knew that many people when not called upon to act, can judge quite correctly, and she saw that now that her mother was yielding the reins of domestic government, she had arrived, for the first time, at the only effectual cure for all their heart-burnings.

"Take a piece of paper, Margaret, my love, and let us calculate what it shall be; set down first, your poor father's salary, one hundred pounds, and the thirty pounds Mark allows us; that, you know, makes one hundred and thirty pounds a year."

Mrs. Hamilton sighed, and passed her hand across her forehead.

"Yes, that is all upon that side," said Margaret, cheerfully, "and now we must reckon our liabilities. House rent, thirty-two pounds, taxes and rates I suppose six, or it is safer to say eight for them, and fifteen pounds for Mary's wages. That will give us just a pound a week for housekeeping, leaving the surplus to pay for Fred's schooling, and other necessary expenses."

"And from that pound," said Mrs. Hamilton, now entering into the scheme with cheerfulness and good-humour, "we must be fed, and with the surplus, I suppose, we must be clothed, make visits, and pay our travelling expenses."

"Yes," said Margaret, "and it would be better to make a dress and sundries fund, and to try each week to add as much to it as possible, or we might determine to spend so much only of the week's money, and reserve a certain sum at once."

"The last would be the best plan," said

Mrs. Hamilton, "but it is not possible, and we must meet our expenses by the week as they occur. We are pretty well provided for in dress for the present, and we must hope for something better next year; besides, we have not reckoned any help from your aunt, which we may surely expect now and then."

"Would not less than a pound a week do?" said Alice, decidedly.

"You must not forget Mrs. Baxter," said Margaret, looking up from her paper, and by the mention of that name bringing to their remembrance a red faced importunate laundress, who made poor Mrs. Hamilton miserable every Saturday night, by her gloomy method of always hinting that she really could not afford to take their custom upon such moderate terms.

"We must say a pound," said Mrs. Hamilton, sighing at the bare mention of this domestic grievance, "and that ought to include Mrs. Baxter's bill But one thing, I

must insist upon, girls, and that is, that my poor boy up-stairs shall not be stinted in anything."

"Oh no! of course not," came in a perfect chorus from the little assembly, for in different ways, Fred was a favourite with all, and with none more than with Margaret, who often found from him more sympathy in domestic concerns than she derived from her sisters. He was a boy, thoughtful, in many things, beyond his years, though possessed of all the courageous frankness which renders boyhood so attractive and so loveable.

"I think," said Margaret, "that we are giving Mary more than we can afford, and that we might get a younger servant at more reasonable wages."

"Who would waste and break more than she would save," said Mrs. Hamilton, "no there would be no economy in that, but if you could get Mary to take less, why—"

Mrs. Hamilton made the proposition with

hesitation, and the little council received the advice very blankly. Mary was so irritable now, that with less wages she would be quite unbearable.

No one would venture to make such a request, and this plan was at once abandoned.

Margaret sighed, for she thought a cheaper servant might do for them, while Mary might be more happily disposed of in some richer family; but she recognised her own inexperience, and it might be true as Mrs. Hamilton observed, that a younger servant would not be so economical after all. It would be a great domestic revolution indeed, to part with Mary, too great to be undertaken without further thought, so that they decided to try with her first of all, and if possible to keep this really attached dependent with them.

And so it was agreed, at length, that each of the three girls in turn, should take the housekeeping week by week.

Mr. Hamilton was amused and relieved, when he heard of this arrangement, though he expressed much doubt of their able management, and brought up innumerable stories, shewing the mistakes which adventurous housekeepers have made.

When alone with Margaret at night, however, for the few minutes before retiring to rest, he spoke to her gravely upon it. Leaning his arm upon the mantel-piece according to habit, and looking sometimes at her, and sometimes steadily at the fire, he said:

"If you can carry out this plan, Meg, it will afford me infinite relief. I am not at all certain that you will not do better than mamma has done. For I have always seen that it is more difficult to unlearn than to learn. She has to give up all her old ideas and habits of doing things, and so have I," he added sighing, "and I do not always do so with a good grace. But you must teach me, Meg, I wish you would find fault with me sometimes."

"Dearest papa," said Margaret warmly, "I never know how to find fault with you."

"And yet you have laid me under an obligation which would make me listen patiently to any thing."

Margaret did not say that advice is never worse received than from those to whom we are obliged, for it is an ungenerous notion, and in connection with him she utterly condemned such a thought, so she only said gently,

"Do not give me full powers, lest I may take advantage of them."

"I have little fear of you," he said in the subdued voice in which he now generally spoke, "but I do wish you to remember that I am willing to put up with any thing, so that you can only carry your plan into execution. I was reading the other day that the German, I forget his name, who laid out the new play grounds upon a plan of instruction for infants, not only spent his whole income in carrying

out his scheme, but lived upon bread and was accustomed to notch the loaf in different places that he might not eat more than a certain quantity in a day."

"Noble man!" exclaimed Margaret, "for hunger was a temptation prepared by Satan for Divinity itself."

"If he could do it for others," pursued Mr. Hamilton, "surely we for our own sakes ought to be able to do the same with greater ease."

"We ought, indeed, and we will," said Margaret decidedly.

"You will have much difficulty," said he, in the same low tone, "you have different tempers to keep in order and to consider; I say you," he said, looking up at her, "because you will do it although you will not seem to do it."

Margaret's eyes dropped for an instant, but then as if assured of her own integrity of thought, she raised them quickly, sparkling like rich jewels in their own light.

"I thought by this plan, Alice and Olivia would take a pride in acting with me, and without that very little could be done. They will learn then the actual value of money, and they will feel the circumstances in which we are placed. They have, perhaps, hitherto thought of the change as little as they would of removing their books and drawings from one school-room to another. This is not well, and I thought my plan would effect a difference, and make us work together. I should be very glad if it would do so."

There was a look of such deep love in Mr. Hamilton's eyes now, that Margaret felt gratified and yet humbled; she knew that his high appreciation of her made it so easy for her to do anything, that there was little credit in it. It is, she remembered, when no one seems to see, or recognize what we are doing, that it is difficult, and therefore heroic to act well; but not with such a dear father as this, always ready to notice and praise me.

"I wanted to say," he said, at length, "that I shall be glad to prove to you that I can deny myself, for I am anxious to recover your esteem; nay, hear me, your love is one thing, your esteem is another. And though I know well that no suffering of ours can wash away one single stain of sin, yet I cannot but believe that the patience and cheerfulness with which we bear it, may testify our repentance, and prove an acceptable thank offering on high."

"I have no doubt of it," said Margaret, eagerly, "oh, my dear papa, how happy you make me! No turn of fortune could, I think, give me the pleasure your words have done to-night; but yet I do trust once again to see you restored to all your old comfort and affluence."

"Do you," he said sadly, "never my child. I have not deserved it. I have put away good fortune from myself. Good night, my dear! I will not keep mamma awake, she has a

hard day as it is," so saying he lighted the tallow candle, which Mary in her hurry had put, not too tidily, into the japanned candlestick, and without looking discontentedly at it as he generally did, he walked quietly upstairs to bed. Margaret remained for some little time standing where he had left her, looking at the flickering firelight, and then suddenly rousing herself, she put aside all that remained of her work, and books, and opening the door walked desperately into the little kitchen.

Mary was sitting at the table engaged in making up a plain morning cap, and Margaret, asking permission to warm herself, stood musingly by the comfortable fire. She had a difficult task before her; but she knew that Mary's good will must be engaged for the new scheme, or it would have little chance of succeeding.

"Mary," she said, at length, "we are all going to try to be very economical, and see

how far we can make poor papa's little income go."

"And very right too," said Mary, "but I do not think you can do more than we have been doing for the last six months."

"We must do better," said Margaret decidedly, now that the ice was once broken, "and I hope that as you have been so kind and thoughtful through all our misfortunes, you will not refuse to help us now."

"I hope you do not think, Miss, that I have not been careful enough, I am sure—"

"And I am sure," said Margaret earnestly, "that there are very few who could do so well as you have done; but, Mary, when I tell you that if we spend more than a certain sum, we shall get into debt, and perhaps send papa to prison, I am sure you will not think me unkind, if I ask you to consult with me for a few minutes."

"I am sure, Miss, I will do all I can," said

Mary, now entirely forgetting herself, for she was sincerely attached to them.

"Thank you, Mary," said Margaret, and then she proceeded to unfold their scheme for a kind of joint housekeeping, and Mary, after some consideration, gave as much approval as seemed to her in keeping with her greater experience.

"Do you not think," said Margaret, trembling, in spite of all her resolution, "that we may keep house upon a pound a week, and sometimes less."

"A pound!" said Mary, in a tone of such complete amazement, that poor Margaret's resolution now failed altogether, and her bright eyes filled with tears, while her cheek reddened painfully; but after a moment of disappointed silence, she said calmly,

"I do not know how far such a sum will go; but it must do, if we live upon bread and water."

"You do not reckon the washing, Miss, of course," said Mary.

"Yes, indeed I do, every thing."

"I do not know how it is to be done, Miss. You do not know the expense of things, how should you know, brought up to the best of every thing as you have been."

"But how do poor people manage?" said Margaret gravely.

Mary evaded this question, and asked earnestly,

"Do you mean to say, that it has come to this, and that Master has no more to live upon?"

"Yes; excepting what must be kept for rent and taxes, your wages, coals, and our dress, which is little enough. And now tell me, Mary, if you have plenty to eat yourself, you will not mind will you, and you will try and help us to do this, for it would be such a comfort."

Mary considered awhile, little thinking how exquisitely painful her silence was to Margaret, who well knew how much her co-operation was needed.

"I will try, Miss," she said slowly, but with that unenthusiastic tone which is sometimes so depressing, "I cannot say more than that, can I?

"No," said Margaret as cheerfully as she could. "If we can do this, however, I think I can venture to promise the addition of a sovereign to your wages at Christmas."

"Thank you, Miss," said Mary, "we can but do our best."

"And you will do that, I feel certain," said Margaret persuasively, now remembering that a scheme which had been worked out in her head for many days past, must be, in reality, so much a surprise to Mary as to be almost incomprehensible. "If you tire of our service, you know, after trying our new plan, you can but change it; and remember that you can, at any time, have from mamma a character which would introduce you to any family, and she would exert herself to her utmost to see you comfortably suited, for you

have served us well for many years. Only, Mary, what I say now, must be done at all risks; and, if necessary, we must even part with you, sorry as we should be to do so."

This speech had its effect.

"Indeed, Miss, I will see what can be done, and I do not mind what I put up with myself. I do not think any one would do more than I can do, and as to wages you might save in that; but, perhaps, have a wasteful servant, who wonld soon squander the difference."

"I know that very well," returned Margaret, "and therefore I shall be very glad if we can keep you with us; but if you go, I should think it quite reasonable and natural, because we cannot give you the comforts we formerly did."

"I shall not go," said Mary decidedly, "so do not vex about it, Miss. I only thought at first, you meant to call me extravagant, which

I have not been; but as long as you are all as kind to me as you have always been, I can never feel that I shall meet with a more comfortable place elsewhere."

"Thank you," said Margaret gently, "you will feel the happier from having done all you can to help those who are in affliction. Good night!"

"Good night, Miss, we must not be downhearted!"

Margaret went up to bed. Her interview with Mary had left a feeling of depression upon her mind, which she chided herself for in vain. There had been none of the enthusiastic affection in their old servant, which she had been sanguine in expecting. She tried to remember the different expressions and feelings peculiar to different classes of society, and the difficulty which these always have in understanding each other, and reasoned with her disappointment, but without effect. She was dissatisfied and could not help it.

But when, in the morning, Mary met her with increased cheerfulness, and additional respect, her confidence was renewed, and her hope of the future brightened. So often it is that when we congratulate ourselves upon our fortitude, we are in reality only influenced by the circumstances which surround and support us.

CHAPTER XII.

THE anxious little home party had agreed that the week's housekeeping should commence with Saturday, that being the day when it was most convenient to lay in stores for the following week; and the accounts were to be handed over on Friday night. The first week fell to Margaret's share, and with it the task of starting those new arrangements which henceforth were to be so rigidly enforced. Many and long were her consultations with Mary, who now that she saw that she was really determined to carry her scheme into

effect, admitted her without scruple into the freemasonry of the art of saving, and taught her many things which she could not have found out alone. Curious were the dishes concocted by Mary, under the new régime, and wonderful the contrivances made. But yet Margaret's plan was one of great practical difficulty, no one could think of suffering Mr. Hamilton's delicate appetite to be neglected, and poor Mrs. Hamilton could not realize the possibility of there being an insufficiency of that cold meat which she could not formerly have ventured to order to be eaten for two following days in her servants' hall. Fred, meanwhile, was recovering the use of his broken limb, and could now contrive to limp upon crutches up and down Starborne Street, an exercise which increased the poor boy's appetite to that actual hunger which is peculiar to returning health, and which it would have been cruelty to deny. Poor Margaret felt sometimes almost inclined to give up the task

in despair, and once again to let matters take their course, but she thought of Mark, and of how heavily their imprudence fell upon him; and of the still worse necessity of having recourse to their good-natured, but frivolous Aunt Ann. Yes! any thing was better than becoming genteel paupers, or that fag end of a family, which is recognized by the expressive term of "poor relation."

However, at the end of the first week, she was forced to acknowledge that every penny of her money was gone, and that there would not have been a farthing at hand, had any unexpected casualty occurred. Alice's turn came next, and though Margaret was ready with her week's experience to aid her, she handed over her accounts to Olivia, with an unpaid balance upon the butcher's book of five shillings.

"I tell you what it is," suggested Olivia, "I have only fifteen shillings left for my week, but I will make it serve. Only you must all

do as I tell you. We must dine early, Margaret, Alice, Fred, and myself, it will be better for our health," she said, with a merry twinkle in her eye, which belied the assertion, "and it shall be better for my housekeeping. Is it agreed?"

"Agreed," said both the others, who were ready to take hold of any anchor of hope, however feeble.

Upon the first Sunday of her dynasty, Olivia's measures were stringent. They all dined early together, but for the rest of the week the early dinner was so managed, that the one joint served up in different ways, furnished what she termed, the high table with ease. Mary's dinner was also well attended to, but the rest took their chance. She boldly limited the bread and butter; laughed over the way in which she managed to make two strong cups of tea, and a dozen weak ones, out of two tea-spoonsful of material, scolded remorselessly those who used a collar

or a frill more than she had permitted, and boldly brought Fred's appetite within compass.

The victory was achieved, and Olivia resigned the reins of government in triumph.

The course which she had laid out was now easy to follow. Mr. Hamilton walked home from the city with a firmer tread. There might be poverty at home, but there was no considerable debt, and the gaping doors of a prison no longer stood perpetually open before his imagination.

Any present from Aunt Ann was now doubly acceptable, because no longer received, as it were, into a bottomless gulf of debt, which swallowed up every benefit, and a basket of game from some country friend was a perfect boon to the housekeeper in office. Nevertheless, all this required perpetual care and unfailing watchfulness, it implied daily self-denial; sometimes even hunger and faintness, but still they kept on, each trying

which should murmur least, and drawing closer day by day the circle of family affection. And Margaret exulted more in this last effect of her measure, than in the actual success of her schemes.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I AM up in town for a day or two," wrote Aunt Ann, one morning to Margaret, "and shall call to-night to take you with me to the opera, where I must have a chat with you. Be certain not to keep me waiting."

This note broke the monotony of some weeks of daily trial, and Mrs. Hamilton was delighted to see one of Margaret's evening dresses brought out once again. She dressed her herself in the simple manner which Margaret insisted upon adopting, but she could not check a sigh when she remembered

that she could not adorn her with ring, or bracelet, necklace or broach of any kind. Mr. Hamilton had, at the time of his failure, insisted upon rendering up every jewel possessed by his family.

Punctual to the hour named, Mrs. Daventry arrived, but as she was always in haste, when bent upon pleasure or business, she declared that she could not get out, and hurried away with Margaret in the carriage she had hired for the evening, without stopping for more than a confused exchange of greetings and adieux.

"One never can have a tête-à-tête in Starborne Street," Aunt Ann observed gaily, by way of excuse, when Margaret found herself seated by her side in a private box at the Opera. Margaret looked round her, dazzled and almost overpowered by the brilliancy of the house, the lights, the dresses, the jewels, and the stage. The contrast of the luxury and ease about her was almost unbearable, when

compared with the home she had left, and she thought of her brother and sisters sitting in the little room down stairs, with a strange feeling of depression. But she rallied quickly, and turning to her aunt, asked if she had anything pleasant to tell her.

"Oh yes, my dear, a great deal, only think, I am settled at last. I have taken a house for three months at Hastings, Richard promises to spend all his Sundays with me, and I mean to carry you away with me, if you will come, my dear. Indeed, I have run up to London on purpose to fetch you."

"I shall be delighted," cried Margaret, with real pleasure, "to look at the country again would be such a luxury."

"I am very glad I have pleased you," said Aunt Ann kindly, "and I am sure the sea breezes will do my Richard good."

Margaret turned her eyes full upon her for an instant. There had been a time when Aunt Ann's dearest scheme had been to

bring these two together, but she had supposed that since their altered fortunes, this idea had been altogether abandoned; she soon perceived that her opinion was correct.

"You will not be my only visitor, my dear," said Aunt Ann in continuation, "for Miss Anstruther has also promised to come. You do not know her, but you will be delighted with her, I am certain; she is only one-and-twenty and so very pretty, and as rich as Crœsus. I mean Richard to pair off with her whenever there is an opportunity, and who knows what may come of it."

Aunt Ann paused and directed her glass to the stage with an expression of admiration upon her features, meant, perhaps, more as a compliment to her own sagacity than to the merits of the performers. Then she added with a smile:

"You know what a determined match-maker I am, and what pleasure I take in the business."

"And how seldom you succeed," said Margaret laughing.

"I beg your pardon," said Aunt Ann, "who could have brought old Dr. Phipps and Miss Daventry to the point but myself, I should like to know. I told him she was visibly pining away before my very eyes, and then left them together in the green-house at Stanmore; contriving to close the door most innocently, knowing that the handle was broken upon the inside."

"And have you a green-house at Hastings," enquired Margaret.

"You wicked girl, you know I am afraid of Richard, so I want you to help me to bring them together. You would not love him yourself, so you might as well help me to couple him to some one else." She looked furtively at her as she said this, perhaps wishing to understand what she tried to believe, that all her former attempts to bring them together had indeed failed, and that no lingering sentiment

of affection existed in Margaret's heart, more dangerous than the respect which her own Richard could not fail at all times to inspire.

"I am no matchmaker," said Margaret decidedly, but good humouredly, "the responsibility is more than I dare undertake, and did I not know very well that Richard can take care of himself, I would warn you against attempting it. It is so much better for a man to choose his own wife, and then he cannot blame any one if he chooses amiss."

"That may be very well, my dear," said Mrs. Daventry laughing, "but there are many men who, but for the help of others, would never choose at all."

"In that case, I should say marriage was certainly not their vocation, and leave them to themselves," said Margaret with answering gaiety.

"You must judge for yourself, Meg; but I thought you were learning a little knowledge of the world which would lead you to lay

aside these romantic notions, and take up some more suited to every day life."

"If I knew where to find them, I would do so," said Margaret smiling.

This was rather a long conversation for ladies, supposed to be hearing some of the best music which the English capital could produce, and Margaret took advantage of this pause to listen with eager attention. As she did so, she became conscious as we sometimes are, almost by a species of magnetism, that an opera glass was directed towards her. Thinking to see an acquaintance in the opposite box, she leant slightly forwards. Though the gentleman was standing behind his party, she recognized him instantly as the hero of the skating club, and, why or wherefore, she scarcely knew herself, her face lighted up with sudden radiance, while the instant afterwards her eyelids fell, and a blush, transient and beautiful as that of an English sunrise, suffused her cheek. At no other time or season of

her life, perhaps, could his somewhat eccentric kindness have awakened so deep an interest, standing,. as it had done, in contrast with all which had made Starborne Street the prison house of her ardent mind.

Mrs. Daventry roused her from the reverie into which she was unconsciously falling by saying,

"How silly we were to come without a gentleman, but I had none upon hand, and could not help it. I am dying for an ice, do they not look tempting?" she added, directing her attention to a tray just handed into a neighbouring box.

Margaret would have been thankful, indeed, for refreshment of any kind, for the sudden sight of food reminded her that she was already almost faint from hunger.

It was her housekeeping week at home, and in her anxiety to make her money last, she had tried to eat as little as possible, and that night, having taken a hasty cup of tea while waiting

for her aunt's coming that evening, she had denied herself the temptingly thick slice of bread and butter which Olivia tried to force upon her, feeling that her aunt's cosy supper-table would be more than sufficient to repay a little fasting, and that she would feel less compunction when eating it, if she did not rob her sisters' tea of her portion that evening; she had, however, ill-calculated upon her strength. The opera which had once seemed such an ordinary entertainment, she now found almost overpowering to her weakened nerves, irritated by unaccustomed privation. The blood horse, with its careful nurturing, sinks rapidly before the spare diet and hard work, upon which the humbler steed contrives to thrive.

It seemed stranger still to Margaret, sitting there, her white hand which, day by day, showed more plainly the clear blue veins, resting upon the soft folds of her white silk dress, with the red camelia ornamenting her

carefully braided and glossy black hair, restored for a few hours to the luxuries of her old life, it seemed strange that she should feel what from infancy to womanhood she had never known, the crying need of actual hunger.

Mrs. Daventry was not, however, inclined for silence, and she soon returned to the discussion of her intended visit to Hastings.

"I have another visitor coming," she said, "and I am sure you will like him, because he is an author. Mr. Travers—such an interesting, noble man, so intellectual and delightful, I seldom can understand a word he says, but then he is such a clever writer, his 'Travels in Circassia,' published this year, are read by every one, and were so highly reviewed in the Quarterly."

"I read that review," said Margaret, "and meant to ask papa to get the book itself; I thought some of the passages quoted, shewed a very fine mind, and much more interesting

writing than is often found in books of travel."

"Well, it is fortunate you like the tone of the work, because you can tell him so; and I know you never can say so, if you do not mean it."

"Of course not," said Margaret smiling.

"Well, my dear, we are not all quite so strict in our notions," said Mrs. Daventry, petulantly, but recovering herself in an instant, she said, "I can tell you what will make you love him, even if he wrote the greatest stuff in existence."

"What may that be?"

"Look serious and curious, and I will tell you with all proper effect. Last night, I was at a very small party at Lady Lisle's, when the failure of poor Edward's bank became the subject of discussion. I said nothing, because it is always unwise to push oneself into an unpopular party, and I thought I could do no good, and would only make the

company look silly by saying I was his sister, so I held my tongue, and said nothing. I heard, however, that no clue had been obtained as to where the absent partners had gone; but that some thought they had returned to England with assumed; names, then some one said that Mr. Barnes must have adopted a wig, for any one would know his silver hair anywhere. You remember what a beautiful tinge it had, and so unlike any other white or gray hair."

"I remember it perfectly," said Margaret, "I used to think his hair turned that colour because he was so good."

"He was a clever man," said Aunt Ann, musingly, for she could not forget how easily, once upon a time, (though she had loved her husband well), she might have been tempted to lay aside her widow's weeds for this man's sake.

"And what followed?" said Margaret apprehensively.

"Why, then, a gentleman I did not know, said, what a pity it was that 'poor Hamilton' had not had courage to keep himself up in the world, for he had taken to gaming and low habits, and there was some suspicion against him at the bank, some money was missing, not much, only a hundred pounds, but the managers had patience, knowing his former history, and as it happened, when the books were looked over, they were found quite correct, either there had been a mistake, or the money had been replaced. I felt ready to faint my dear, and was thinking what I ought to say, when who should step forward but Mr. Travers. 'Sir,' said he, 'it is not right to repeat calumnies about an absent man, when the very proofs are, you allow, in his favour. To my certain knowledge, Mr. Hamilton gives up the interest of money settled upon his wife, which you all know he might justly have retained. His own sister bought in at the sale, the

small portion of his furniture which he chose to keep, while he delivered up every article of jewellery belonging to his wife and children, and even sold their furs, and every thing else which could fetch money. Mr. Hamilton acted nobly, and I for one will not believe any assertion made against him: on the contrary, I would bank with him to-morrow, were he in a situation to do business.' Goodness gracious, my dear, what is the matter?"

During this narrative, which had been told with Aunt Ann's usual rapidity, the colour had been gradually fading from Margaret's cheek, the lips quivered, the eyelids drooped, and she fell backwards, completely insensible.

When she again recovered her senses, sufficiently to be aware of where she was, she found herself upon a sofa, in a small and most sociable looking room, in Mivart's Hotel, where Aunt Ann had taken up her temporary quarters. The latter, with her maid, was busy

in the use of restoratives, but even in that moment of sleepy consciousness, Margaret could perceive that Aunt Ann was more pleased than alarmed.

"Only think," she heard her whisper to Martin, who shared almost all her mistress's secrets and schemes, "that he should carry her to the carriage, and insist on coming home to see her safe, putting her on that sofa with his own hands; could anything be more fortunate, if I had contrived it on purpose, it could not have happened more opportunely."

Margaret's large eyes opened slowly, and rested full upon her aunt's countenance. Mrs. Daventry started uneasily, but hastened to soothe her by every term of endearment she could think of at the moment, and so contrived to mystify her, that she almost fancied the words she had heard, must be part of the dream from which she seemed awakening; for Aunt Ann ashamed, perhaps, of the sentence she had uttered, or knowing

how little it suited the candid temper of her niece, quite refused to let her talk, or ask any questions, but sent her to bed immediately, it having been previously arranged that she should sleep there, and go home in the morning.

CHAPTER XIII.

A storm has passed over the garden. Yesterday it was bright and smiling, to day its flowers are broken down, its creepers trail upon the wet ground, its lilies are splashed and soiled, scattered branches torn from surrounding trees have fallen over and disfigure the parterres, and every thing looks as if trampled upon, and defeated by a remorseless foe.

So was it with Margaret. A storm had passed over and broken down her spirit. Bowed and drooping before the force of circumstances, which were strangely adverse to

her powerful and straightforward mind, she had returned to Starborne Street on the day which followed her visit to the opera. Every thing which had there pressed upon and annoyed her received now a deeper and an overwrought impression. The very stillness of the street wearied her, broken as it was only by the shrill cries of the venders of cheap articles, perpetually bespeaking an inexpensive and plebeian neighbourhood. Even the evergreens, which had been placed in the front of the house, in the first buoyancy and novelty of their change, stunted and brown as they now were, gave back but a sad reflection of the spirit which was chafing against its chains, and wounding itself at every turn. How long we live sometimes in a few hours, a week or a month. The impressions now unconsciously deepening upon her mind, measured themselves not by their length, but by their intensity.

The terrible words which she had heard re-

peated at the opera, had thrown her into a state of nervous excitement, against which she had scarcely the power even to struggle.

So deeply had she felt the sin, so humbled had she been by the reality of her father's dishonour, that she had never fully realized until now, the fear of the world's cruel, but truthful censure, or a shrinking from exposure to its remarks, which now pressed upon her in full force. He whom she had so loved and honoured, whom even in his fall she had so deeply reverenced, turning aside her head in willing blindness, even while she helped to heal the wound he had bestowed upon his own soul. Yes! he might be attacked, and she had no power to offer the bold defence, and the direct denial which of all arguments, alone are really convincing. And if what she had heard should reach him. If her aunt should connect facts, and if she already had learnt to do so when she had laid such a stress upon the words "only a hundred

pounds." If she should be tempted to tell of her loan to any one, and thus afford the link now wanting in the evidence; or if the suspicions of the banking firm, now once awakened, they were only waiting for a convenient opportunity of dismissing him in a kindly manner. What then? Oh! if they had not only done a merciful thing, but held their tongues while doing it, what agony they might have spared to the noble spirit, which was now wounding itself almost to death.

Aunt Ann had been detained in town by legal business for a considerable time longer than she had calculated upon, and this gave time for Margaret's fretful malady to increase. Night after night she watched for her father's return with restless and almost unbearable impatience, conjuring up a thousand evils if he did not come punctual to the very minute. Night after night, kneeling in the little room down stairs, long after the others had retired,

her head bent down and her arms folded, she tried with earnest prayer to hold back the fate which seemed coming with darkening and overwhelming power towards him. The temptation upon her then, was not that she should cease to pray, but praying that she should cease to trust. She knelt before the only rock which can afford us shelter, or stand between us and calamity, she bowed her head in the dust and worshipped, she clung to it with the wildness of agony; but she could not catch from it the living water of rest and peace.

She was in this state of feeling when Mrs. Daventry, one day, wrote to say that she should leave town on the following morning, and she would join her at the London Bridge Station. Margaret felt glad to go, it would be a relief to escape from her father's watchful eyes, her mother's ceaseless anxiety, and the remarks of Alice upon the necessity of supporting unvaried cheerfulness in the midst of calamity, sentiments which she delivered

with the gravity and severity of a Knox. Olivia seemed, however, to be throwing off the husks of youthful opinions, and began to shew a mind in which, the carefully grown fruit was ripening to the sweetness which should be peculiar to a woman's feelings.

"I am so glad you are really going," she said, as she lingered round Margaret that evening, finishing her packing, and shewing an unusual desire to save her trouble, "for you have been looking so out of spirits lately, and I hope it will do you good. You must get your colour back again, and bring home a store of good spirits."

"I will if I possibly can, dear," replied Margaret, "but will you promise me one thing?"

"Oh yes! if I can. I shall be glad if you will give me anything to do while you are away, for we shall miss you sadly."

"Will you," said Margaret sorrowfully, for

she had been such a sad companion to herself, that she thought others must be glad to lose her, and then, after reflecting a little while, she said earnestly,

"You must promise, then, to be very watchful of papa, do not let him be out of spirits, but talk to him, and cheer him as much as you can."

"I will try," said Olivia, with less energy; "but you know no one understands papa so well as you do. But I daresay he will do very well."

Margaret's bright eyes burnt like fire in strange contrast to the pallor of her cheeks.

"What you say is true, nobody understands him as I do, and I ought not to leave him."

She sat down upon her travelling trunk, and with her eyes fixed upon the floor, she fell into a fit of long and painful musing.

Her very brain seemed to be growing weaker before this constant anxiety of thought, and intensity of prayer, and she felt that if she

stayed, she was more likely soon to require care than to be able to give it.

"Forgive me," said Olivia, standing now close beside her, and twining her arm round her neck caressingly with the feeling which for good or for evil grows in the young mind with such almost magic rapidity. "I will do what you wish, papa shall not miss you, if that is what you really mean, though I would not willingly supplant you."

"Do not think of that," said Margaret eagerly, "that would be blessed rivalry."

"I did not know," said Olivia earnestly, "that there could be so much of Heaven in a human heart."

"Hush!" said Margaret, whilst a quick and almost painful blush stole over her face, "remember we are two struggling and erring mortals talking to each other."

"Well, then, about papa, I will take great care of him, and walk out with him on Sundays, and not think a bit of my new crochet,

when he is at home. Will that do, and will you love me very much?"

"Do I not love you now?" said Margaret warmly and excitedly, "would I not give my life to screen you from evil, to stand between you and ill fortune, were it coming, to make you happy now and always?"

"You use the word 'you' in the plural sense," said Olivia, a feeling of disappointment shewing itself in the tone of her voice, "I asked you to love me."

"And so I do, Olivia, believe me," said Margaret, with the same excited feeling flashing in her bright black eyes, "and will love you still more if, you will do what I say. Oh! never, never forget what a change this is to poor papa, remember always what he was; master of wealth and influence, his company sought for, and himself so universally respected; and then remember what he is now, worn down and oppressed by poverty for the present, and anxiety for the future: a wife and family

wholly unprovided for. All the many insurances upon his life made for them, given up, nobly given up for the sake of his creditors. many of whom, nay all, perhaps, are richer than himself, and he but a poor broken down banker's clerk; subject to every annoying feeling of constant dependence, badly paid, and *liable at any moment to dismissal.*"

Margaret's head sunk upon her bosom, and she fell into one of those fits of thought, now so painfully usual to her, while Olivia watched her apprehensively, and felt perhaps that she, for the first time, understood the depth of that love, which had hitherto shewn itself to her, rather by its invigorating effects than by itself.

"This is very painful talk, dear Margaret," she said, at length, "you have been thinking of these things, until thought has made you ill. I am so glad you are going away, because I see how much you need change. I will take care of papa, and will make him quite happy.

I will make him sing with me, now that it is warm enough to sit in the drawing-room without a fire; and I will be Margaret, while Margaret shall go to Hastings and ensnare hearts, and bring one back with her to cheer us in Starborne Street. You know not how foolish I have been, I fancied, and so did mamma, that you were thinking all this time of Captain Vincent."

This was the name of an admirer of Margaret in her sunny days, whose very existence she had forgotten in the absorbing topics of the present.

"Captain Vincent! why you know I did not like him; he proposed, and I refused him."

"Yes! but we thought foolishly. Mamma says a girl seldom knows her own mind; and we judged you Margaret by other women, not by yourself. I know you now, and the knowledge shall do me good."

Margaret drew her face down towards her, and kissed her lovingly.

"How kind and good this is," she said more cheerfully; "how often I have longed to tell you something of what I have been feeling, to earn your sympathy by giving some of my confidence, but—"

"But," said Olivia, "I have been so deep in Hallam, so grave with Dante, and so grammatical with Murray, that you thought I could not feel, and perhaps I could not. I am not certain that I should have responded to your confidence three weeks ago. I am only just beginning to see that there may be as much vanity in over study as in a ball or a picnic.

"I am so glad," said Margaret, and would have added more, but Olivia put her finger on her lips, saying gaily.

"That is a full stop. Now you shall come down stairs, and then that will be the last word. Glad! yes, that shall be a good omen for Hastings."

Margaret smiled, for she saw that to Olivia

the Captain Vincents of society still formed an essential part of the world, but she rose, and putting her arm round her waist, they went down stairs together.

CHAPTER XIV.

The next morning, Margaret was travelling down to Hastings with Mrs. Daventry. Leaning forwards in the railway carriage, she watched the smoke of London as they gradually left it more and more behind them, and when after awhile they passed on to the open country, with its pleasant hedge-rows and the bright green foliage of early summer every where around them, she experienced a sensation of relief she would have deemed impossible a few hours before.

There is no earthly remedy for sorrow so

good as change of air and scene, and Margaret, though she continued to think began to look more hopefully and cheerfully upon the trouble which had so much oppressed her, or rather, perhaps, though the trouble remained the same, she thought of it with less attention and intensity. Nor was she inclined to reproach herself with frivolity, there was nothing like pretence or seeming about her, and she welcomed this change of feeling with as much gratitude as surprise.

It was late in the afternoon, when they arrived at Hastings. Mrs. Daventry's carriage (for she kept both carriage and horses, though her wandering habits rendered them often entirely useless) was waiting for them at the station.

Margaret loved the sea, but she loved the country far beyond it, and she was glad to find that the house which Aunt Ann had taken was in the pleasant Croft.

This house was a large one, shut in by

green gates, and surrounded by a bright and luxuriant garden, with its green-house attached to it. It boasted, from its elevation, a good view of the bold and open sea, but Margaret liked still more the sober view of All Saints' Church, with its old tower and rugged gray walls, contrasted with the clear white grave-stones, and the range of rocky downs behind, which seemed to lift themselves up to meet the kisses of the fleecy clouds that rested so often above them.

It was a pleasant house, certainly, which Aunt Ann had chosen. Something peculiar and marked, Margaret had been certain it would be, and here it was with its old fashioned rooms, and its deeply set windows, round which lovely creepers were twining. The furniture of the place was very good, but not in the slightest degree showy, only very heavy and very comfortable, with cushioned window seats, and low arm chairs and luxurious footstools. The garden was in keeping with the

house, and though very small it was so intersected with walks and divided by shrubs, that it formed no uninviting lounge for town ramblers who find a pleasure in the simple fact of being able to get out of doors without hat or shawl.

Margaret's heart beat with a sense of freedom. It would be so pleasant to ramble here, to pick flowers, or tend them, to be free and at ease.

They sat down to what Aunt Ann called an excuse for a dinner in the large and somewhat sombre dining-room: but which poor Margaret, half smiling to herself, regarded as luxurious fare, she could actually eat without feeling selfish, for there was enough and to spare. Yes! even much more bread cut in the basket than was needed. She smiled, indeed, as this fact would assert itself, for accustomed to the usages of wealth, there was always something whimsical to her in the needs of poverty; and she remembered how welcome such an

overplus would have been to poor Fred's craving appetite.

"We will be so happy, Margaret," said her Aunt, as they lingered over their dessert: "at least, if contentment and good fellowship can make us so. Julia Anstruther comes to-morrow, and when Richard and Mr. Travers join us, we shall be quite a merry party. You must look your best, Meg; not that you do not look interesting enough now, but you are more like the great white lily out there, and with your rich deep colour, and glossy black hair, I used to compare you to the 'red red rose.' I am seldom anxious, it does not suit my temperament, but I am getting anxious about you, for you were always my child. Tell me, is there any truth in the Vincent story?"

"And what is the Vincent story?" said Margaret, with perfect composure.

"Why, your mamma tells me she fears you are sorry now that you refused Captain

Vincent, and that your health began to fail soon after his marriage appeared in the paper."

"And when was he married? I never saw it," cried Margaret, almost joyfully, for poor Vincent's discomfiture had formerly sat rather heavily upon her.

"Why, your mamma said she burnt the paper; but she thought from your hurried manner and swollen eyelids that day, that you had seen it first, and that she was too late."

"Whom has he married, then?"

"Plain Mary Wilmot to be sure; but then she always liked him, and has plenty of money."

"I am so thankful," said Margaret, fervently, "she will make him a good wife, she was always so kind and thoughtful."

"What did you know of her?" enquired Aunt Ann, with a little of the testiness she usually exhibited, when she met with what

she termed, some of Margaret's over romantic notions.

"Mary was his cousin," replied Margaret, "and used to be so patient with his whims, that I was often lost in silent astonishment to find patience could go so far. I think she must have been attached to him then, and if so, her amiability has been rewarded. Perhaps, she sympathized with him in his most unhappy liking for me, and so won the regard which he has now shewn. But I do not care much how it was," she added, laughingly, "so that he has relieved my conscience from his broken heart, which he said must always lie heavily upon it."

"And so, my dear, there was no disappointment; and your affections are still perfectly free?"

"I object to that question," said Margaret, while her eyes sparkled with a whimsical merriment, "not because I cannot answer it

now, but because I may not like to do so at some future time."

"You are a teasing girl, and I never could get to the bottom of you," said Aunt Ann, "those were the very words Richard used the other night, when I asked him the same question."

The merry sparkle was still in Margaret's eye, but there was no answering blush, though Aunt Ann watched her steadily.

"Come, aunty, this is unprofitable talk," she said coaxingly, "and you know both Richard and myself are too wise to fall victims to any scheme, however concocted."

"You know nothing about such things," said Aunt Ann looking, nevertheless, rather discomfited, "you wise ones are more ready to walk into a noose blindfold than the silly ones, I can tell you."

"There will be little temptation for me, I fancy. Dowerless girls are seldom asked to Gretna."

"I should think not," said Mrs. Daventry, with some asperity, "but they may be asked to become the wife of some sensible man, and if they are, I see no reason why they should be romantic."

"None in the least," said Margaret, "but come and review your domain; you do not know half its beauties yet. It will not tire you, for we need not put on our bonnets."

Strolling round the garden arm in arm, talking of the flowers, the distant sea and the reposing beauty of the old church, Margaret flattered herself that she had now her aunt's sympathy in a scene which Cowper might have envied. But Aunt Ann, though seemingly wrapt in attention, was saying to herself all the while, "I would give the world to know that she is not in love with Richard.

CHAPTER XV.

THE lingering shadows of a summer evening were falling fast, as Mark Hamilton walked rapidly from his chambers in Chancery Lane towards the open streets which surround the finest railway station in the world, the terminus of the Great Western line. The moon was shining bright and clear, and beneath its influence, skirted by Hyde Park, and the richly wooded gardens of Kensington, the uniform regularity of these new buildings, showed forth with almost fabulous beauty and magnificence. Like some marvellous city in the Arabian

Nights, this new part of our mighty metropolis seemed to Mark to be sleeping in the influence of the pale Queen of Night. There was no noise, hardly any life or movement, scarcely any passengers save himself; at least, none who did not sink into insignificance before the vast quietude of the spacious streets and terraces. Only here and there the soft music of harp or piano, and the sweet sounds of ladies' voices stole through open windows, and flitting forms passed to and fro, and showed their shadows upon the white window blinds. In some houses, even such precautions seemed unnecessary, and fair young beings stepped out upon the balconies, and lingered there to talk romance, and to look at the moon.

It was, indeed, summer again, and Mark might well remember it, for time which is noted by disappointment goes heavily, and leaves leisure for reflection. Another year had stolen on, lagging, weary and hopeless, so lagging,

so weary and so hopeless that Mark's brave heart was nearly giving way. He must soon make up his mind to turn from a profession which had failed him. His was not a spirit that could lie down and starve. His self-reliance was too great to permit him to believe that because he had failed in one thing, he must necessarily fail in every thing else. and although he had a reluctance and hesitation in leaving the path in life which he had chosen, he determined rather to do that than to live on in perpetual failure. But yet a little while, and he must and would decide. His intellect was too great not to be, in spite of his good heart, restless and unsatisfied. He must make his way, at the risk of being censured for turning back, and stigmatized as having failed; he must find work some where, and some how, and he would. It should not be the great mortification which, in prospect, it always appeared; it should be as a great trial which he would bear cheerfully and cou-

rageously as a Christian man should take his crosses and his difficulties; and yet, still he put off the evil time a little and a little longer. But as he now moved quickly on, he was not thinking of himself. His care for others had always been of good service to himself. The flush upon his cheek, and the settled purpose of his countenance were quite apart from the sluggishness of disappointment or despair.

He stopped, at length, before the door of one house in a fine open street, into which he was soon afterwards admitted by a man in livery.

"Is your master at home?" he enquired.

"He is just at his dessert. Will you walk in, Sir?" replied the man.

Mark answered in the affirmative, and the servant ushered him into the dining-room. With this room Mark was well acquainted, and he did not now trouble himself to notice the signs of wealth it everywhere displayed,

the glass and gilding, the hangings and pictures about the walls, or the shining massive table with the handsome decanters and small but choice dessert upon it. He did not notice these, but there is something in the close approximation of wealth which poverty is sure to feel. And now it fell with a sense of chilling division upon him, even while he extended his hand with much frankness to greet his cousin Richard Daventry.

Richard rose, and returned his greeting with an affectation of condescending warmth. His manner was that of a man who felt perpetually, that having acquired a position in the world, it was his bounden duty always to remember it.

Pushing the decanter towards him then, he relapsed into silence, supposing, and perhaps with some truth, that Mark came for something, for the days were long passed when such an after dinner tête-à-tête would have tempted him to walk so far uninvited.

"Perhaps you will guess my errand," said Mark, as he slowly filled his richly cut glass, and drank its contents, perhaps to remove the chill which, notwithstanding the summer night, rested everywhere about the carefully furnished room, from the gilded cornice, to the host himself, and was even stealing to his own tongue, and chaining down his ideas. But he brushed this quickly away, and as Richard listened without interrupting him, he further explained himself, "I want to learn about poor Jasper."

"I am afraid," returned Richard, "he does not deserve your pity. You have not probably heard that my father's gold snuff-box, which I was one morning foolish enough to leave upon my dressing-table, was found together with a valuable ring of my own, secreted in his box, while another ring of less value is missing."

"And you really think him guilty?" enquired Mark.

"Think him guilty," repeated Richard, "I am certain of it; at least, I see no reasonable doubt."

"And you intend to prosecute?" pursued Mark earnestly.

"And I intend to prosecute," said Richard sententiously.

"This man has been to me to-day," said Mark, warming rapidly, "in a state of the most pitiable grief and anxiety. He declares his innocence in the most solemn manner, but confesses that the proofs are so strong against him, that he can but throw himself upon your mercy, and he entreated me to intercede with you, for your pardon of an offence which he declares he never committed."

"This is ridiculous," said Richard, frowning, "if you do not take care, you will be the receptacle of all the thieves and sharpers in London."

"Remember," said Mark, "he was my

father's servant for twenty years, he never once, during that time, suffered from the slightest imputation of dishonesty; but upon the contrary, was always implicitly trusted, both as regards the cellar and other points of consequence."

Richard helped himself leisurely to a fine strawberry, and having fully tasted and enjoyed its flavour, replied,

"I think you will scarcely deny that a generous man, like your father, was very easily to be deceived."

"I agree with you," said Mark, "but I knew the man well myself as a boy, and though I cannot, of course, vouch for his innocence, still I think that he deserves every consideration at our hands."

"I look upon the affair in a very different light," said Richard, "I consider that having had the vigilance to detect him, after a long course of dishonesty, the duty of punishing him lies with me."

"He has a young wife, and a child of only three weeks old," pleaded Mark.

"Well, he should have thought of that before he committed the crime. This to me only aggravates his offence, and shews an additional amount of depravity, for he had good wages, amply sufficient for the support of this wife and child. He must, therefore, have spent his other gains at the theatres and ale-houses.

"He has ever been a sober and quiet man. Have you no suspicions of any one else in your household; was there not a house-maid who felt herself aggrieved by his marriage."

"Really, Mark, I have too much to do to enquire into the gossip amongst my servants. Nor do I see how I can suspect others, when such manifest evidence is found against him."

"Nothing is a trifle when a man's guilt or innocence is concerned," said Mark gravely,

"Jasper says, that when this girl learned that he was married, thinking he had paid some attentions to herself, she declared that she would ruin him, if she waited ten years for the opportunity."

"Words spoken in anger may or may not mean anything," said Richard carelessly, "however, this is idle talk, I was about to write and ask you to conduct the matter for me, that is if it goes to trial, for my solicitor can take it before the magistrates. It will be an opportunity for you to shew your powers, and as the thing is so plain, you will hardly fail to win the cause."

"If you are determined to prosecute, I must tell you that Jasper has already detained me upon his side."

"Oh!" said Richard stiffly.

"I could not refuse to serve an old servant, knowing, or feeling rather, so strongly that he is innocent, though I shall be very sorry to appear against you."

"Take another glass of wine," said Richard, haughtily waving the necessity of an answer.

"I own," said Mark, as his eyes sparkled with professional pride, "that the case is a complicated one, and therefore that to me it has peculiar temptations; yet I again ask you to consider whether it be not possible to pass over the offence. There is the possibility, nay, the extreme probability of his conviction; and believing him to be innocent, I think time and your leniency may exonerate him, while his character, unless completely cleared, is, of course, ruined without recall, when it has been once brought before the public. I ask this, Richard, as a personal favour."

"And why are you so certain that he is innocent?" enquired Richard sulkily.

"Because I have known him for twenty years, and he has never told me a lie before. No! nor any thing near it."

"Well," said Richard, "this I will do. You may tell him that if he confesses his theft,

and leaves London on his way to Australia in four and twenty hours, I will not attempt to stop him. If he confesses his guilt to you, it will be sufficient."

"And if not?" said Mark.

"I will have him arrested as soon as the twenty four hours have expired."

"As you would deal so leniently with him guilty, cannot you extend some mercy to him if he still persists in his innocence."

"Most assuredly not," said Richard, sententiously, "for then I should have no hope of him. But we weary of the subject; that is my resolution; and when I make one I always abide by it."

"Then I must do the best I can for him," said Mark, "I wish I might have trusted his character rather to your mercy than to my ability; but as it is, I do not despair of saving him.". He rose as he said this, and Richard shook off his sullen mood and asked courteously:

"Are all well at home."

"I hope so," Mark replied, "Margaret is with your mother at Hastings."

"Yes," replied Richard, "and I think of going down there Saturday, or the week after."

"Indeed, a pleasant trip—good night."

"Good night, Mark! I think you will find I am right."

"I trust not, indeed," said Mark, fervently; and he went on his way.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARK walked on for a little while, then turned down a narrow street, occupied by small shops, and stopped at one of them, which was a greengrocer's. It had been by his advice, that his father's old servant Jasper, had started this shop when he married, and by his recommendation amongst his old friends, that it had become a flourishing business. He, therefore, had always noted it with peculiar pride. To-night there was, or so he fancied, a desolate appearance about the usually thrifty shop. Upon tapping for admittance, Jasper

himself opened the door, and welcomed him warmly, for whether he brought good news or ill, Mark's presence afforded a support in the trying hour. He led him through the shop to a little half parlour which commanded it, and which usually had about it an air of peculiar comfort. Here Mark, in a few surprised seconds, took into consideration the unexpected company which filled it. Upon a low rocking chair which she moved softly, sat the young wife and mother, holding a tiny infant in her arms. She was simply attired in a closely fitting lilac linen dress, with a small cap, coquettishly trimmed with white matronly ribbons. But simple as her dress was, it shewed to full advantage, the extraordinary beauty and delicacy of her face and figure, which were rather enhanced by the bright feverish flush upon her cheek, and the sparkle of her eyes, toned down as they were by the troubled expression of painful anxiety, which sat upon her countenance. Almost by her

side, sat a still younger woman, a dark shawl closely wrapped her figure, and was fastened tightly at the throat, but her straw bonnet was held carelessly in her hand, shewing to advantage the soft wavy tresses of the light brown hair, which adorned a peculiarly small head, and shaded features, in which the most exquisite and womanly sensibility found expression, rather than beauty or intellect.

Seated at as respectful a distance as the small room permitted, was an older woman, habited in the style of nurse or housekeeper.

"My wife's young mistress, Sir," said Jasper, as Mark hesitated, "she is kindly waiting to hear what news you have for me."

Mark bowed with an involuntary look of interest, which he could not resist.

"Pray tell it if you will be so kind," said the young lady.

Mark turned to Jasper, and in a few words told him the result of his interview with his

cousin, and the only condition upon which he would refrain from a prosecution. He spoke kindly of Richard, said that he believed him guilty, and that, of course, the evidence against him was very strong.

Jasper was a quiet, painstaking undemonstrative man, but he could not suppress his indignation, when he fully understood the nature of his master's proposal.

"I cannot," he said, "confess what is not true; and I will not fly, for that would be against me, so I must stay and be condemned."

"What are we to do," said the young lady, addressing Mark, "I see no way of clearing away this accusation."

"Nor I at present," said Mark, "but I trust something may be elicited."

"I waited here for the purpose of seeing you, Sir," she said rising as she spoke, but speaking with pleasing frankness, "to tell you that as Mary was my maid for some years,

and only left me to be married, and as she was very kind to me when I needed kindness, (she said this emphatically, perhaps for the purpose of encouraging the young wife who looked so heart broken,) that, therefore, I am as much interested in them as you are, and as I have no personal influence to offer as you have, I shall esteem it a very great favour if you will allow me to take the responsibility of advancing any money that may be needed. Nay you must not refuse me, it is so painful to be able to do nothing for a friend in trouble."

"You are very good," said Mark, "should money be needed, I will not forget your offer."

"But it will be needed," she said persuasively, "I am anxious to engage a solicitor who would himself engage others, who would understand better how to detect the real thief. Pray save me the trouble of doing so, because you have undertaken first to befriend him, and I may do what you would not like. "Ah!

I see how it is," she said, perceiving that he still looked incredulous. "You think I cannot afford it, and indeed I can very well; but as you will not believe me, I will ask my uncle to call and persuade you. He knew your father once, and so you will believe him, I know. Good night, Mary, keep up your spirits for baby's sake, and I shall come and see you to-morrow."

And so, followed by her elderly attendant, she passed rapidly away.

And Mark felt that the light of the little room had gone out.

He sat still, however, far into the night, anxiously questioning Jasper, and trying to learn something from his answers, which might give a clue to the best line of defence. He sat long after Mary had retired with her baby, by Jasper's entreaty; and then he bade him good night, and told him to hope for the best, and went home to his quiet chambers.

But why, instead of going off to bed, did

he sit in his oaken arm-chair, one arm leaning upon his table and his eyes fixed upon that bright midsummer moon, over whose face fleecy clouds flitted one by one, casting light shadows over the starry sky.

What, Mark! have all your classical studies, all your dusty law books, failed to shut out that vision of the soul's happiness which steals upon the heart when first it learns to love. Is it so, indeed, and will you take this new passion, and placing it in the crucible of your own good and faithful heart, turn that which is to many but a sorrow or a shame, into a joy and an ambition. The world may scorn your love, and say it is but the passion of a poor man, and therefore valueless; but blessed will that woman be who can enshrine herself in your noble heart, come what will.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE next morning, Mark listened for the sound of a step upon the stair, with a restless longing which he could not set aside. Would the uncle, of whom she spoke, really come to seek him at her bidding? This was a question which he asked himself many times that day. Yes! she was right; at all events, she did not speak what she did not mean.

In the middle of the day, when traffic was at its briskest point, the narrow thoroughfare was greatly incommoded by the stopping of a

heavy carriage at his entrance. He saw this from his window, as he paced the room in restless thought, and his practised eye told him that this carriage had good horses, was attended by respectable servants, and had all the accompaniments of wealth about it, which he understood so well.

But his neighbours upon the first and second floors had much business. This call might be for them; it might be, but it was not, as Mark's flushed cheek and quickened ear told full well, as he heard the visitor's steps pass the doors below, and labour up his flight of lead-covered stairs, with every now and then a long pause of fatigue.

Presently there entered his room a very old, and very gentlemanly-looking man. Though the stairs had evidently tried his strength, he made no comment upon their heigth; but struggled, with real courtesy, to suppress every sign of labouring breath. Mark hastened to accom-

modate him with a chair, and resuming his own place at his table, waited with attention for the stranger to state his business.

"I am Mr. Lyndhurst," said the old gentleman, "and you will not be surprised at seeing me, as my niece tells me she prepared you for my visit."

"She was so good as to mention her intention of asking you to call upon me," said Mark, bowing.

"She tells me that you are kind enough to undertake the cause of the husband of poor Mary, her late maid, in whom she has been deeply interested, for with all the enthusiasm of youth, she believes implicitly in his innocence."

"I think she is right," said Mark.

"I trust so," said Mr. Lyndhurst, "and, therefore, as she has set her heart upon it, I have come to consult you upon the matter. We ought to find some solicitor clever in these things, who will well work up the evi-

dence, if needed. But is it clear, my dear sir, that his master will prosecute?"

"I fear so," returned Mark, "I know a solicitor who would do the business well, if you like to employ him. I have myself promised to appear in behalf of our old servant."

"So I understand, Sir, so I understand; all that I am anxious to do is to have the affair in proper hands, before it comes to you in the ordinary course. And this expense my niece is anxious to defray. Will you then let it be so?"

"I will allow her to share the expense with me," said Mark, smiling, "which I think will be a sufficient demand upon a young lady's purse."

"Well, well, you must settle that between you," said Mr. Lyndhurst, not ill-pleased by this last remark, "and now will you excuse my taking such a liberty, and let me ask you to look in upon us this evening. We expect

a few dancing friends, and if you have no objection to anything so trivial, we shall be very happy to see you."

"I shall have very much pleasure in doing so," said Mark, scarcely feeling able to restrain the unreasonable pleasure which the invitation gave him, and the old and young man parted, mutually pleased with their short interview.

Mark was a very handsome man, but his good looks were so thoroughly manly, that he scarcely knew what petty vanity meant. Now, though he really was anxious to appear to advantage in the eyes of his new friends, his toilet gave him little trouble. He was always dressed in a gentlemanly manner, and he cared for nothing more; for the rest, he was at home in good society, and he knew it.

It was rather late in the evening when he reached Mr. Lyndhurst's house, and as he ascended the stairs, he heard the merry sound of music and dancing. It was not a large

house, but it was perfectly furnished, though this Mark learnt subsequently, for everything was deranged and rearranged to suit the occasion. The drawing-room which had been cleared for dancing, was now filled with young people. Mark found no little difficulty in reaching the end of the room, where his hostess was conversing with some of her more elderly guests.

She was dressed in simple white muslin which fell round her in soft graceful folds. Certainly, however freely she opened her purse strings, it was not to spend its contents upon herself, at least she had not done so to-night. She held out her small gloved hand as Mark advanced, saying with that sincerity of kindness, which is so charmingly different from the grace of coquetry. "It is very kind of you to come to us upon so short a notice," she then said, turning to Mr. Lyndhurst, who was approaching, "Mr. Hamilton is come at last."

The gentlemen exchanged greetings, and then his young hostess turned to Mark, and said anxiously,

"I am so sorry to be dancing to-night, when poor Mary is in so much trouble; but you know how offended my friends would have been had we put them off for such a cause. And yet I feel it to be unfortunate, as nothing is well which gives our domestics an idea that we cannot sympathize with them."

"I think you are quite right," said Mark, looking down approvingly at the small figure which stood beside him. "One of my favorite notions for many years past has been to bring the feelings of the rich and poor more upon a level. It is a species of communism which would do infinite good, and would help to spread civilization and refinement more than any thing else."

"I quite agree with you," she said gently.

"Were we once convinced of our real ignorance on these matters," continued Mark,

"I think we should make a greater effort to be enlightened. For example, what do we know of the feelings and principles which govern the hearts of those who sleep under our roof, eat of our bread, and minister to our comfort; who perhaps repeat after us day by day the words of that most beautiful of all prayers, and make open profession of the same faith."

"And yet," she replied, half smiling, "it is an established rule in the education of a young lady, that she should never talk much to servants."

"I know it," said Mark warmly, "in this way we cut off the simplest link of union between us. Do not, for an instant, suppose that I would pretend to advocate a child's being left much to servants, but, with proper restrictions, a well educated child is more likely to refine and elevate a servant, then the latter is to demoralize it. This extreme separation of classes is a great evil, and we shall do well to look to it."

"There is much truth in what you say," said Mr. Lyndhurst, who had been listening attentively, "but like all young reformers, you are before your age. You must begin at the right end, and elevate the classes themselves before it would be possible to allow one's children to mix with one's servants. For my part, much as I feel for and pity their ignorance, my fear of contamination would far out balance my wish to serve them, at least in the way you propose. But this is an old argument between my Kate and myself. I say that she carries her views too far, for she has educated that pretty maid of her's, Jasper's wife, till I think she is almost above her station."

"I have only taught her to read and write fluently, and given her an easy knowledge of accounts, and some little insight into common things," she said laughing. "You know, uncle, I know very little more myself. She was a beautiful girl," she added more seriously,

"and how else could I protect her from a careless world, but by giving her power to reflect properly. And was I not right, for did she not marry the quiet, elderly, well behaved Jasper, in preference to Lord Langley's valet, who is very fine, but very foolish?"

"Well argued, my little advocate," said Mr. Lyndhurst, "but you know it is the exception which proves the rule."

"Perhaps," said Mark laughingly, "we have appeared to be in error, by suffering education and refinement to be the exceptions. I would they were the rule, and such a golden time is advancing slowly, but rapidly."

"And few have done more to produce such an effect, perhaps," said Kate, "than he who in such spirited verse has taught us, that '*a man's a man for a' that.*'"

"Truly so," said Mark, and he was about to bring forward some other quotation from the Scottish bard, when they were interrupted

by the approach of an elderly young lady, who from having been an admired beauty, had now unnecessarily degenerated into a spiteful flirt; unnecessarily because she was still a very fine woman, and had a witty tongue.

She now whispered very audibly, so as to be heard by her own partner, upon whose arm she was still leaning, as well as by Mark.

"What, Kate! monopolizing the finest man in your room."

The rapid blush which spread from cheek to temple, told that their hostess was still young in the by paths of the ball-room; but she turned instantly to Mark, and introduced him to Miss Tindale, the lady who had so spoken.

He immediately asked her to dance, and stood by her until the music commenced. Perhaps he was not quite proof against the flattery of being termed the finest man in the

room; or, perhaps, he thought her style of character was likely to afford that amusement which he was rather too fond of finding in the follies of others.

"I have never seen you here before," said Miss Tindale, "and, therefore, I presume you are a new acquaintance of Miss Lyndhurst's."

"I am," returned Mark, "and, therefore, I must throw myself upon your kindness to quiz a little for my benefit, and point out some of the people in the room, for all are new to me, except two or three, and with them I am not personally acquainted. Pray then enlighten me while I remain discreetly dumb; for I never yet made an observation in a strange room, without being punished for my temerity, by finding that I was speaking of my partner's sister, or brother, or cousin."

"First tell me then," said Miss Tindale, laughing, "that, upon your honour, you have not a speaking acquaintance in the room.

"Not one; of course excepting my host and his niece."

"And of them?"

"I have met both once before in the way of business."

"And you are?" said Miss Tindale.

"A briefless barrister at your service."

"That means, that you have more business than you can get through."

"I am glad to hear it, but now a truce to ourselves. Let us quiz our neighbours."

"Well then, for Kate Lyndhurst, I am afraid we must put her into the list of good-natured negatives, she does not even attempt to do every thing 'prettily,' as your Martial says, so sneeringly."

"Why I thought she introduced me to you very prettily."

"Not a bit of it, she would not have thought of it, if I had not suggested it. Her whole soul was intent upon listening to you, she

never can do more than one thing at a time."

"What a paragon of a woman," said Mark, laughing, "now for the rest of her negatives, imprimis, she can never do two things at a time."

"She cannot dance, not to say dance," said Miss Tindale, "she cannot play on the harp, or piano, or concertina, or guitar; she cannot sing, except in church, where I heard some very flat notes one Sunday. She is not a good linguist, she is not clever, she is not well read, particularly, she is not anything out of the common way in needlework. Stay," added Miss Tindale scornfully, "she is one thing, a good house-keeper."

"Bravo!" said Mark laughing, "we have found something at last. And how long have you known her."

"All my life," said Miss Tindale, "all her life" would have been the more correct phrase; but Miss Tindale preferred her own mode

of saying things. "But," she added, "I forgot one point upon which briefless barristers are necessarily particular, she is very rich," she saw the colour mount to Mark's cheeks, and continued, "not only rich, but independent, for though she lives with her uncle, she has all her father's money and her mother's too, being an only child; and so you see she is not likely to remain long a nobody; for, of course, anybody would be ready to give such a 'cypher worth.'"

"And what of her uncle," enquired Mark.

"Oh! he is a dear old man, he gave me this love of a bouquet, which shall protect him for, at least, one night. No, we will not quiz him, only that I often wonder whether that silver hair is his own or a wig; but then people never buy white wigs, do they?"

"I beg your pardon, I have something like one at my chambers."

"Ah! but that is not a common wig, and of course barristers try to look old in court.

I have never been to those horrid old courts, and I should so like to go."

"They are certainly worth seeing to those who are fond of sights. You could go with any gentleman friend very easily."

"One's friends are always busy," said Miss Tindale affecting to pout.

"What happy men they must be," said Mark laughing.

"Happy at not being able to escort me," said Miss Tindale, who could always give conversation a coquettish turn.

"A man could make time for such a pleasure surely," said Mark, bowing.

"Well, we shall see when we are better acquainted," said Miss Tindale, "for I should not care to go into court without a wig."

"A wig," said Mark, horrified, "Miss Tindale with a wig on."

"I did not say with a wig on myself, but with some one who had. I do like things in keeping. If I visit Oxford, I do like to be

escorted by a cap and gown, and the same holds good of the courts. Were you ever in Oxford?"

"I was."

"On the books?"

"The tradesmen's books? I hope you do not take me for a spendthrift?"

"I mean is your name entered."

"I hope it is," said Mark gravely. "My father paid the proper fee."

"Can you be found in the Oxford Calendar?"

"I reside in chambers at present."

"You stupid man. I hope you were not plucked, I shall look in the Calendar to-morrow to see if you took honours."

"You honour me."

"Only think," said Miss Tindale, "the waltz is over, and we have only taken one turn, how stupid you are."

"Rather say how interesting you have been. Are you engaged for the next, and

may I have the pleasure of atoning for my stupidity."

"The next is a song," said Miss Tindale smiling, "which I have promised to sing. See Miss Lyndhurst is looking for me, and as I never pretend to be nervous, perhaps you will be kind enough to lead me to the piano."

Mark immediately did as she requested, and, placing himself by her side, prepared to turn over the leaves of the music. Miss Tindale sang remarkably well, and the Italian melody she had chosen was well calculated to display the rich tones of her voice.

There was a murmur of applause when she had finished, in which the sweet voice of their hostess was most audible. And then Mark found himself again by the side of Miss Lyndhurst, when he took the opportunity of asking her to join the waltz which was just commencing. "Thank you," she said, "but I have declined dancing to-night. It is almost impossible to dance and entertain at the same time,

for I do not like to see any one dull. Let me introduce you to some one."

"Not now, thank you, if I am inclined to dance, I will come to you. You set us a bad example."

"I trust not, indeed, but if you had analyzed evening parties as much as I have done, you would see how very unkind it is for a host or a hostess ever to forget that their business is to make their guests happy."

"But then, the dancing sets being arranged," said Mark, "you can surely do no more."

"Yes, indeed I can," she said, laughing, "as you will readily observe, if you take the trouble to watch."

Saying this she flitted away, and Mark saw the waltzing ranks muster rapidly beneath her orders.

The shyest young men found partners, and the quietest girls were soon engaged; and then Mark saw her deep in conversation

with some old ladies upon a sofa, awakening animation, where before entertainment had gone to sleep. The temptation was irresistable, and Mark was soon again by her side, and deep in the conversation which, without a shadow of wit, or a single sprinkling of learning, Kate Lyndhurst had somehow made very interesting. She was telling them about the poor 'persecuted man,' who, perhaps, at that very moment was being taken away to prison, and in a little while so worked upon their feelings and curiosity, that three of the listeners declared their intention of supporting the greengrocer's shop, and its pretty interesting mistress from that day forward, and of regaling all the guests, who might taste their vegetables with the story of the persecution.

"All very well," said Mark, presently, when she had removed from their vicinity, "but you need not have made my poor cousin Richard such an ogre."

"Oh, did I! but I did not mean to do

that. I fear, however, he is not very popular with me in this case. But I said very little about him."

"Only by implication."

"Well, I beg your pardon, I am sure. I know a little of Mr. Daventry, and really did not mean to hurt him."

"No, I am sure you did not," said Mark, smiling, "but 'evil is done by want of thought,' and I really do not know how Richard is to think Jasper guiltless, except by taking my word for it."

"You are quite right," said Kate, thoughtfully, "how easy it is to fall into the errors of party spirit."

The first signs of the early daylight were now beginning to shew themselves, even here in the well-lighted room, and the company were slowly departing. Mark took his leave, and concealing his evening dress with a light overcoat, prepared to walk home. The streets were quite light, and the lamps, like tired

watchers, burnt in a feeble manner. The houses had still a sleepy shut up appearance, though with many, the business of the new day was beginning. Mark took the way home, which led him past the shop of poor Jasper.

A light was burning in the upper window, which, though shaded by a muslin curtain, was open. He stopped and watched it, and then impelled by a curiosity he could not resist, he stepped to the door and tapped. An old woman opened it. Yes! Jasper was gone, they had fetched him off the night before; and—yes—his wife was ill, and had the doctor with her now.

Mark turned away, and hurried home.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE tide was coming in. The moon was playing in silvery dimples upon the summer sea, which rose and murmured, fell back and yet advanced further up the shore with every breaking wave.

There are no sands at Hastings, excepting some narrow slips lying between low rocks deep down upon the beach. But these are smooth, and when the tide has been out for the greater part of a summer day, they are dry and hard, and to those who do not care

for a little rough walking, which is necessary to reach them, they afford a pleasant, though but a short promenade.

It was Saturday evening, not late, for the moon had risen early. Up and down the narrow piece of sand, Margaret Hamilton was walking, her companion being Miss Anstruther, the young heiress of Mrs. Daventry's dreams. Mrs. Daventry had not rightly described her when she called her very pretty, and yet she was very far from ill-looking. She was stouter and heavier than the generality of girls of her age, and more impassive, so Margaret thought, than any one she had yet seen so impassive that she found herself often speculating whether her character were very deep, or had no depth at all. Good-nature, though not of an intrusive kind, seemed, at present, however, the chief feature of her character, and this made her a very pleasant and acceptable companion to Margaret.

For the last few days, though the expected gentlemen had not yet joined their party, time had passed not only smoothly but agreeably. They had practised duets and sung songs together, and had read out the last new novel which had much captivated Aunt Ann. This evening, however, was the last of their comparative seclusion, for Richard was to pay his Saturday's visit, and Mr. Travers was expected by the same late evening train. Margaret was almost sorry, and was indulging now in many a laughing regret, at this breaking up of their seclusion, while Miss Anstruther agreed with her usual good nature.

The intimacy which had risen up between them was one of circumstance. The chances were greatly against the probability of either selecting the other in a crowd, but here they were by themselves, and, nothing preventing, good will ripened fast. Margaret was glad to meet a new mind, knowing nothing either of her former self or her present harassing troubles,

requiring no confidence with regard to either, and so affording an entirely fresh field of interest. Nor must it be deemed strange or unnatural, that when the feverish hour of the London post was past, her mind should recover its elasticity and indulge in the sunshine, which she felt she had the power to impart.

This week of girlish unconstrained enjoyment and free unlaboured thought, formed a resting place between the past and the future of which Margaret was much in need, she accepted it with gratitude, and already the excited lustre of her eyes had subsided into their wonted gentle brilliancy, and the glowing tint upon her cheek had changed once again the pale lily, as Aunt Ann would have described her, to the richer beauty of "the red, red rose."

The two girls stood now together, sometimes listening to the breaking waves, and sometimes clambering from stone to stone

to watch the tiny rivulets, which meandered through them to meet the coming sea, and which before they could reach it, were lost in the soft sand. They were not talking except at intervals, and then rather in detached sentences, observations upon the moon, the sea, or something which being actually present, suggested ideas without fatigue. Margaret thought then that she was sorry the short week was gone, and that she should never tire of such gentle repose. But she was not made for indolence, it was very well for one week's holiday; but in another week, she might have turned from it with disgust and ennui.

They moved, at last, lingeringly from the shore, and walked slowly homewards to the Croft. Aunt Ann was expecting them with impatience, being anxious to give the first meeting a scenic effect. Her pink ribbons arranged with all the care of a Parisian artiste, were already holding

out welcome to the coming guests. Miss Anstruther complained that the sea had wetted the skirts of her dress, and hastened to change it for a new and expensive silk.

Margaret laughed, and accused her of being bent upon conquest, though Mr. Travers was an author, and Richard's heart was harder than adamant. Yet she asked herself with the first touch of pain which she had felt that week, whether Aunt Ann's poison, as she called her match making spirit, was already working. But she put these thoughts from her, and hurried down stairs, for setting some faults aside, she was sincerely fond of her Aunt. What a delicious half tea, half supper was laid out for the expected travellers. That with the sociable trio, who presided at it, would or ought to be sufficient to revive any two tired men, if they had either romance or love of creature comforts in them, or both mingled

as Aunt Ann laughingly observed, which was by far the most likely.

The candles were lighted, though the windows were still unclosed, and the soft evening air stole in through the jasmine which encircled them. Presently the heavy gate opened, and there were steps upon the gravel walk, and Aunt Ann, as she looked from the window to watch for her son, exclaimed:

"That is all right, they have found each other out, and are come together."

Cousin Richard had been an admirer of Margaret in her palmy days, when her place had been with the rich of the land, but no idle remembrance had been left sufficient to tinge her cheek, or quicken her pulse. Mr. Travers and his celebrity had equally failed to waken her expecting fancy in any great degree, though she turned her eyes towards the door with just sufficient interest to meet them now. Why then did the quick blood mount from cheek to brow, and her heart beat with

such sudden rapidity, as the gentlemen entered.

Mr. Travers waited till Aunt Ann's warm greeting, and hurried introduction of the heiress had past; and then he took the few steps which were needed to bring him close to Margaret, saying with a look of eager enquiry :

" You do not quite forget me ?"

" Oh no !" said Margaret, smiling now with easy frankness as she extended her hand to the hero of the skating club, " and *you* are Mr. Travers. How glad I am to be able to thank you for your great kindness to my brother."

" Do not thank me," he said smiling, as wearied with his hot and dusty journey, he sank into the chair nearest to her, " or I shall have to say that it was more than repaid by the pleasure of that drive to Islington ; and there are some things I would rather feel than speak."

"Feel my gratitude then," said Margaret, "and I will not speak it."

"I will feel, understand, and even exaggerate it, if you please."

"That would be difficult."

Richard now came to Margaret's other side, with a little impulse of jealousy which he could not suppress, though he believed he had long given up any intention, however latent, of bestowing upon her the honour of his hand. He now demanded a cup of tea, for she was presiding over it, and she turned with ready politeness to oblige her aunt's great idol, though she never had been able to worship him, with as much zest as the rest of his family did.

"Why, mother," he said, with the little pompous air peculiar to him, "what have you been doing with Margaret, she has not looked so well since—"

Margaret had a noble mind, she had met poverty and failure with a steady heart, why

then should the allusion pain her so evidently as it did, so much as even to curtail Richard's sentence.

"I am glad you think so," broke in Aunt Ann, nevertheless looking with a troubled air at her heiress visitor, whose new and fashionable silk dress had attracted so little of her son's attention.

"Oh Meg, Meg!" she thought, "do not fail me, I have the best heart in the world; but I should not like my son to marry a girl without a sixpence."

"You will be surprised to learn," said Richard, with the evident intention of engrossing her attention at the expense of Mr. Travers, "that I and Mark are going of have a legal battle."

"You and Mark!" said Margaret, in surprise, and then she listened with much concern to Richard's explanation to Jasper's delinquency.

"Oh! I think Mark is right," she said,

at length, "I always trusted Jasper so entirely; but, of course, the case is so strongly against him, that I cannot wonder at your believing him guilty. But you have not quarrelled," she added earnestly, turning her dark eyes full upon him.

"Oh, dear no!" he said in a half whisper, "I would not quarrel with your brother for the world, however much I might differ from him."

"I would not answer for you," she said aloud, for to annoy either her aunt or her guest by appearing upon lover-like terms with Richard was one of the last things she wished that evening. She saw, too, that Mr. Travers had moved a little from her, and was paying very assiduous attention to the pigeon-pie, which creature comfort, Miss Anstruther was helping with much dexterity.

She was glad of this, she felt that she could speak more freely now that his atten-

tion was a little removed, and as she led the conversation from the tête-à-tête style to a more general tone, giving to it, as it flowed on, a sparkling merriment which was infectious, and was caught up by every one, Aunt Ann was forced to own to herself that her dear but rather too solemn Richard never was half so sociable anywhere as in Margaret's company.

It was the sense of an internal happiness in the present hour which Margaret had neither wish nor power to analyze, which shewed itself in such a lively and unaffected manner, that both gentlemen seemed actually to sun themselves in the pleasure of her company. If Miss Anstruther did not talk much, it was not her way in company, but her silence had the utmost good-humour about it.

They were all tired, at least, so they confessed themselves to be; but they sat late, long

after the supper was removed, talking with the freedom of old friends. Richard had put off his chain armour, at least for that Saturday night, until Monday morning, and when at length he retired to bed he was forced to own that he feared, he very much feared, that he was as much in love with Margaret as ever. Had she shewn by word or look, or even tone of voice, that which to him was synonymous with all that is vulgar "poverty," the chain which he had long since believed broken, would have remained broken still. But now, she was actually the same Margaret as ever, she had not abated one inch of her independent spirit. It was surprising, it was odd, very odd. He could not so have maintained his independence, he felt he could not. Assuredly he admired her more than ever, she was his most bewitching cousin still. Oh! that he could blot out Starborne Street and "the family!"

He laid himself down to rest with the uneasy feeling that for a man of the world he was a very foolish one, but to dream of Margaret nevertheless.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT a contrast this was, indeed, to poor Starborne Street. The Sabbath morning ushered in by the church bells, which seemed to purify the air, upon which they sounded with such holy power.

There was no sign about the Croft of the busy influence of London, which was keeping the fish market so painfully stirring, even while those pleasant bells were knelling.

Margaret walked up and down the little garden before breakfast, amongst the bees

and mignionette, and the scarcely wakened butterflies, listening to the birds singing on the old trees about the Croft. She was up early, very early indeed, as compared with Aunt Ann's breakfast hour, but she could not rest upon that Sunday morning, until she had learnt that her short lease of happiness was running still, that there was no bad news from Starborne Street.

Olivia would have been a daily correspondent, under the influence of her quickened affections, had it not been decided in council, that the penny stamp was worth a penny roll, or a bundle of water-cresses, so all unnecessary letters had been curtailed.

There was, however, a letter from Mark, a long letter, telling the story of Jasper, and of his introduction to the Lyndhursts. He did not speak very much of Kate, he dealt very slightly upon the chance of his conduct of this case being the possible opening he had so long desired. He began to speak more

of the future, more of the general possibility of good springing up some where to some of them. There was a sense of hopefulness, which chimed in well with her present mood, and in the comfort it gave her she fancied the birds were singing more joyously.

She was walking still with the open letter in her hand, referring to it at intervals, when Mr. Travers came upon her in a turn of the walk, and joined her with a pleasant good morning.

His boots were soiled with dew and dust; and a stout stick was in his hand, he had been exploring early.

"You have good news from Starborne Street," he said, the name had never sounded to her so homelike before.

"No," said she, "my letter is from my brother Mark."

"Mark—Mark Hamilton, is he a brother of yours?"

"Yes, do you know him then?"

"No; but I saw him the other night at the Lyndhursts; and a fine fellow he is too."

"He tells me of that party," said Margaret, smiling with interest; "Mr. Lyndhurst is a new introduction. Do you know them well?"

"Yes, very well. I have known Kate Lyndhurst since she was quite a little thing, and a very good girl she is. Your brother was very attentive to her, and I, watching in one of my idle moods, weaved out quite a little romance about them."

"Indeed, then, I am glad that you describe her not as pretty, or clever, or elegant, but as 'a good girl.' But you must know that he has in general a very high appreciation of woman, and if he has a fault, it is that he is too prone to shew it."

"It may be so," said Mr. Travers laughing, "you should ticket him as dangerous then. How is your other brother? I should have ventured to call, to enquire

for him, but excepting for that day when I was at the opera in the evening, I have been in the country ever since. I heard of him through Dr. Arden."

"Oh, thank you! Fred is quite well, and able to go to school again."

"I am glad of that; and you, I trust, have had no more fainting fits, since that evening?"

Margaret started.

"How did you know I fainted?" she enquired nervously.

Mr. Travers looked embarrassed by the question, and as she seemed as little inclined to continue the subject as he did, he found an easy opportunity of changing it.

What else did they talk about — the celebrated author, and the sometimes brilliant Miss Hamilton—as they wandered round the garden until breakfast? Did they comment on the scent of the sweet-briar,

chastened by the early dew, likening it to the spirit subdued, and yet freshened by the night of adversity? Were they attracted by the bright tuft headed daisy, and did they draw from it and mingle together some choice recollections of childhood and childish dreams and joys? Did that sleepy butterfly call forth some moral reflection, or did that glowing sky waken some poetic fancy? Perhaps their communing was still more in keeping with those sweet and holy bells, and the quiet Sabbath morning.

Certainly, Miss Anstruther's most polite and good natured summons to breakfast from the open window startled both, and touched a charmed influence whose spell should be broken never more.

Richard had over slept himself, and coming down late to breakfast, happily escaped all knowledge of the morning's tête-à-tête, and fancied perhaps that his attentions of the

night before, which he could not conceal from himself had been pointed enough, had brought such a becoming flush to Margaret's cheek, and such a soft yet magical brilliancy to her eyes. He was pleased, what man could help it when his vanity was so reasonably flattered, so he chatted away at breakfast without the least bit of solemnity, declared the country air had already given him an appetite, and that Margaret's tea was the best he had ever tasted.

Oh, Meg, Meg! thought Aunt Ann when she went up-stairs to put on her last new bonnet, a pleasure which she could not resist, even in the country. Her only consolation, at that moment, was that Richard would be off on Monday, and that a man of his knowledge of the world, must recover his senses by another Saturday. That Richard, her Richard, could be anything but irresistible, she never stopped to doubt.

She was not surprised; no, she took it

with the same composure, with which we take strange contradictions in a dream, when she saw Richard draw on slowly, and with much precision, a pair of new lemon-coloured kid gloves, and with as much slowness and solemnity, offer his arm to Margaret to take her to church.

"Well," thought she to herself, half in amusement, half in bitterness of spirit, as she contemplated Miss Anstruther's provokingly good tempered face, "I cannot help it if people will not be agreeable and fascinating. I can but bring the horse to the well after all, to make him drink seems beyond my power. How saucy Meg will be if she remembers our little talks upon the subject. I wish she would not look so bewitching and so independent."

In spite of all Aunt Ann's worldly wisdom, there were few she loved better than Margaret after all.

Not only did Richard escort her to church,

but sat by her side when there, and read from the same hymn book. Aunt Ann tried to school her thoughts; but as she watched them standing there, and heard his voice mingling with Margaret's, his voice, that of her now worldly minded son, but once a laughing child upon her knee, rocked to sleep in her arms, and sinking to rest upon her bosom, how could she choose, while that holy melody found its echo in her heart, but wish that she and he might put the world aside, and that they might take Margaret, that child of an enthusiastic soul, to their hearts for ever.

These thoughts were dissipated more rapidly than some would believe possible, as they mingled with the well dressed congregation, as it streamed forth to fill the streets and parade.

The deeply sounding sea spoke of eternity, omnipotence, and of a time when time shall be no more; but the parade was full of the

world, and Mrs. Daventry's heart was too ready to respond to it.

They returned to lunch, still Richard and Margaret, while the three followed more slowly. They would reach home first, and would enjoy a dangerous tête-à-tête. No, already as they entered the sitting-room Margaret was returning, and had made use of the time to take off her bonnet, Aunt Ann heaved a sigh of relief, but Richard's face was clouded.

In the afternoon they had resolved to go to the little church of Stayre, standing so venerably amongst the trees. When the time came to start, Aunt Ann declared herself against the scheme, pleading the heat of the day, but her objections were overruled by Richard, who upon every occasion was certain to have his own way. She should have a chair, and be protected from the heat, but go to Stayre church she must, and go she did. To put Richard in an ill

humour was what from childhood to manhood she had never cared to do.

Whatever had been the cause of the cloud upon his brow which his watchful mother had noticed, while Richard drew on his gloves, he determined in his own mind that Margaret, with a woman's fondness, which she would not be able to controul, would linger over the rose she was gathering until he offered her his arm, although Mr. Travers was so earnestly assisting her to gather it, cutting away the thorns upon its stem, and choosing green leaves to place with it.

As, however, Richard fastened the last button of the glove, about which he would seem to care so much, Margaret preceded Aunt Ann's chair with Mr. Travers by her side, and his mother asked him in a voice only too distinct, to give Miss Anstruther his arm up "that tiresome hill."

There was no help for it, and with an internal anethema against his mother's man-

agement, which was doing more than any thing else to hurry him into the wisest thing he was ever likely to do, he offered his arm to Miss Anstruther. Poor girl! she found him a dull companion, and any thing but the perfection which his mother had represented to be, so many times that previous week. Meanwhile, Margaret and Mr. Travers walked on together, and though the walk seemed long to the others, its length was not noted by them. When the hill became really so precipitous as to tax her strength severely, he offered her his arm; and when the little party lagged behind, he chose for her some smooth thyme covered bank, upon which to rest until they came up, while he stood by, carrying on the conversation, which had flowed in earnest language, well befitting that Sunday afternoon.

To Margaret, whose highly cultivated mind had been so long tied down to the drudgeries of a life which had not been

habitual to her, the conversation of the talented Mr. Travers was a perfect luxury, and awoke within her sentiments and impressions of the beautiful, which had long lain as dead.

They drew near the little church at length, and guided by the bell which alone seemed to break the perfect repose of the scene, they entered a narrow path, shaded by dark firs, whose sombre hue contrasted pleasantly with the bright sunshine, which had proved so fatiguing. Then they gained the church porch, and found themselves part of a simple congregation. Aunt Ann's fashionable bonnet was entirely lost upon such a scene, and she could not help whispering her marked disapproval of the neglected state of the hassocks and cushions, and looking into the corners of the pew for dust.

But to Margaret there was a charm here which rivetted her attention, and elevated her spirit. Why was she so very glad, and why did such a deep contentment steal into

her heart when she saw the fixed attention of Mr. Travers during the service, and while listening to the sermon, whose very simplicity served for beauty, and which touched the soul without the aid of any display upon the preacher's part?

Mr. Travers regarded this preacher earnestly. He was still a young man, though approaching middle age. He had come down, perhaps, from Cambridge or Oxford, to receive this as the reward of his learning, the privilege to teach these grey-haired men and simple women. Here his path in life had probably ended, his ambition found its rest. And Mr. Travers told himself that this was enough, that here was work majestic enough for any mind.

"I wish that I were such a man," he said to Margaret as they again took the path through the firs, he by her side, "I wish I could so satisfy the cravings of my heart, and say this is my duty, and I will do it."

"Our duties are often simpler and closer at hand than we suppose them to be," said Margaret, "but you should not regret that you have opened for yourself a wider sphere of influence."

"No," said he, "and yet here, in the simple rounds of parish duty and church offices, surely the heart must find always that rest, which I find only sometimes."

"Is not that our grand mistake," suggested Margaret, "to suppose that any where upon earth we can find rest. The word seems scarcely to apply to our working day. I think the great happiness of life, consists in having the heart and mind fully employed, and our faculties developed in their utmost strength."

"You are right," he returned thoughtfully, "and yet how we covet rest."

"Was it not a pleasant picture," said Margaret, "when Christian found that shady arbour beneath the hill, and yet how

sorry we are when he sleeps and drops his roll."

"Yes, I remember it well," then he mused awhile, and resumed, "but you possess the talisman of youth, which I have lost. Life is full of new and stirring interest to you, everything you look upon is sound and perfect. Your tread has not yet discovered the hollow caverns which lie so often beneath what we deem solid rocks."

"I do not think life is hollow," said Margaret, "if we take the right road, that though narrow is straight, and though hard is solid. We may, sometimes I think we must, meet with many sorrows, but thought of the end satisfies and sustains us—

> "The path of sorrow and that path alone,
> Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

No, I am thankful to say, that though my eyes are often so blinded with tears, that I cannot see it, the map of life lies before me clear and perfect."

"It does, it does," said Mr. Travers with enthusiasm, "no one could know you and doubt the fact. Truly, you deserve to be the child of such a father, so honourable, so justly honoured."

Could words of studied bitterness have wounded her more than this high praise. Sweetly the wild clover scented amongst the low grass which bordered the pathway, and the little daisy meekly raised its head, rejoicing in its humility. Oh! how she longed to throw herself upon that green grass, to lay her now burning forehead upon the ground, by the side of those friends of her infancy, and weep the bitter tears, which by a strong effort must now be suppressed.

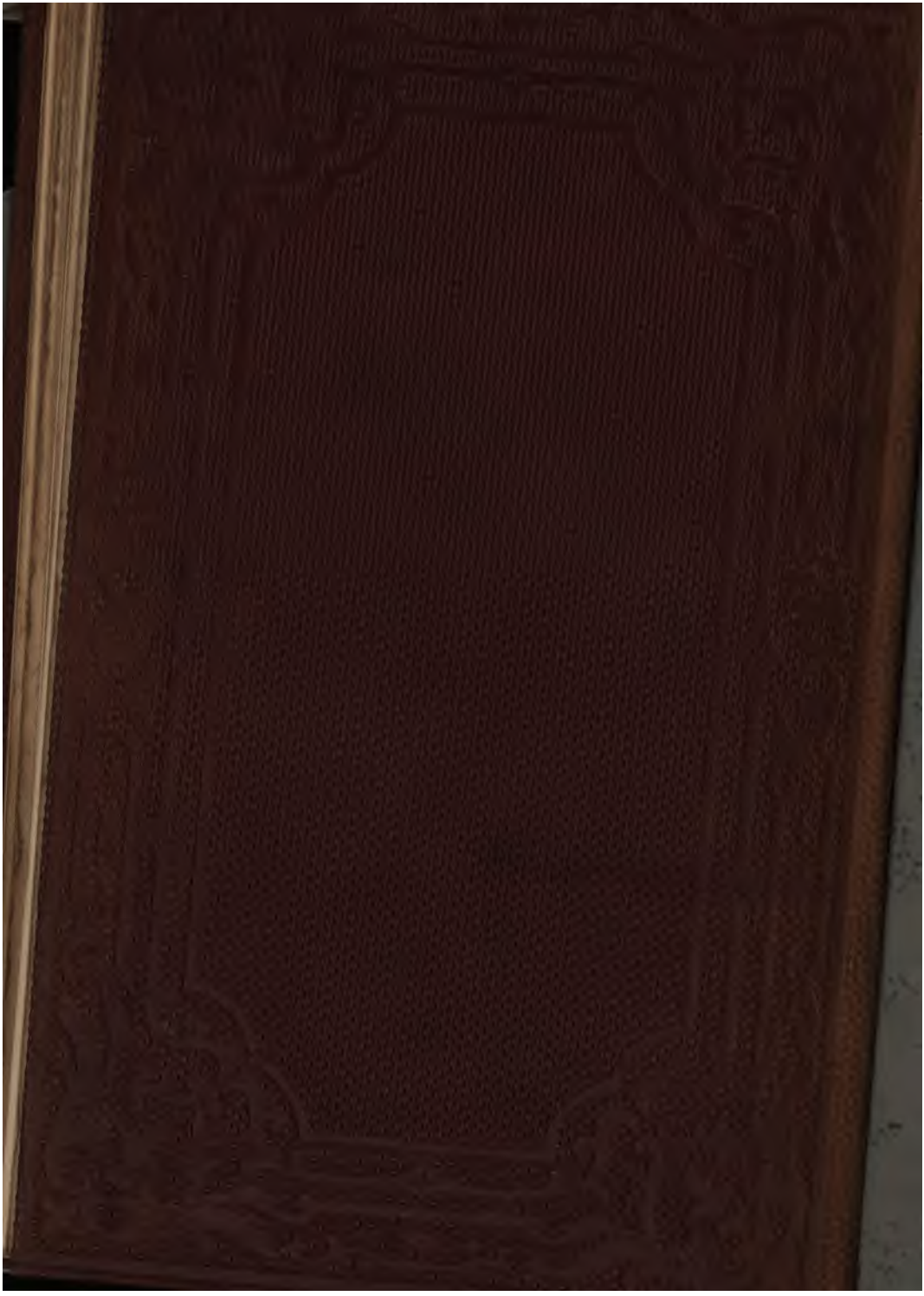
Mr. Travers perceived the change instantly, but attributed it in his humility just then to anger at his venturing to compliment her so openly.

In a moment, his manner changed to the most earnest and careful attention. How rash and foolish he had been to say what she

disliked, she might trust him he would never offend again. She was wearied, and he was strong; would she take his arm that he might steady her tired steps.

He was so vexed and grieved, so anxious to render atonement, that though Margaret's power to smile, seemed to have deserted her, she rewarded him with a timid look of grateful feeling, which assured him that whatever else oppressed her, she was at peace with him.

"Oh, never, never!" she exclaimed, when once more alone in her own room, "must I speak of him, my dear, dear father, or I shall betray him, whom I love more than life."

END OF VOL I.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.